

IMAGES AT AN EXHIBITION

An Organic Theory of Imagery in
Middlemarch and The Portrait of a Lady

Sophia Poulakou Andres

Ph.D.

University of Edinburgh

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ABSTRACT

Working primarily with George Eliot's and Henry James's fictional and non-fictional works, I have formulated an organic theory of the imagination which can be used as a critical approach to any good novel. Eliot's and James's analogy between an organism and a literary work in their respective essays, 'Notes on Form in Art' and 'The Art of Fiction', conveys three important tenets of organicism: incompleteness; the interrelationship of the parts to the whole; and the synthesis of diverse materials. The emphasis which Eliot and James place upon the visual in literature has led me to consider images as the parts of a novel which display the primary concepts of organicism outlined above.

In the first chapter, I rely on Coleridge as the primary spokesman for organicism. I have taken into special consideration his comments in Biographia Literaria and Shakespearean Criticism because they elucidate Eliot's and James's ideas on organic unity. My focus is on explaining key concepts such as: beauty; taste; feeling; proportion; germ; and reconciliation of opposites. Images, I show, embody all these concepts.

An understanding of images, their genesis, form, and transformations, necessitates a closer study of their

life-cycle--perception, memory, and imagination. This is the subject of the second chapter in which I begin with Coleridge's concept of the imagination and establish its affinities with Eliot's and James's theories. At the same time, I outline the important effect Eliot's and James's ideas have had on twentieth-century philosophical and psychological studies of the imagination and its affiliated faculties--perception and memory. My choice of different authorities in psychology and philosophy has been based on the fact that their insights seem but parts of a coherent whole. The interrelationships of imagination, perception and memory in a creative act and in a creative reading of a novel are also concerns of this chapter.

The reader's or critic's perspective is the subject of the third chapter. Coleridge's sympathetic criticism has taken into account the primary concepts of organicism and prefigures Eliot's and James's aesthetics. My focus is on four principles of recreative or sympathetic criticism which have been adopted by modern organicists: an attempt to recapture the artist's feeling; a concentration on the excellences, not the defects of a work; a judgement derived from intrinsic rather than extrinsic rules; an oscillation from the parts to the whole. Images express Coleridge's critical concepts. Images provide the means by which the writer's, the character's, and the reader's imaginations merge. Gaston Bachelard's visual rather than linguistic approach to images seems to evolve from Coleridge's, Eliot's, and

James's aesthetics; his organic theory of imagination calls for abandoning traditional classifications of images, for enjoying their visual form.

I consider images as pictures in my analytical chapters on Middlemarch and The Portrait of a Lady. Simultaneously, I approach the two novels as the embodiments of an organic theory of the imagination, demonstrating how from a single image, the germinal image, all other images, events, and characters evolve. Part of the chapter on The Portrait of a Lady is devoted to exploring the novel as James's recreative criticism of Middlemarch. The primary consideration in both chapters is on the imagination, its growth and refinement.

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PREFACE

The very first time I came across George Eliot's 'Notes on Form in Art' and Henry James's 'The Art of Fiction', I was struck by the analogy which both authors use between a novel and an organism. That in itself crystallizes the close relationship of the aesthetical and philosophical convictions held by both Eliot and James. Working closely with their letters, notebooks, and critical essays, I have been delighted to find what appears to be a complete theory of organic unity, a stimulating approach to the novel.

Tightly enmeshed with organic unity is an organic theory of the imagination, which Coleridge has attractively and convincingly expounded in his own criticism and prose. The Romantic roots of Eliot's and James's philosophical notions have already been subjects of long studies. This is why I have not dwelt upon the roots only, but have also explored the modern directions to which Eliot's and James's theories of the imagination have extended. Indeed, twentieth-century critics of organicism and the imagination have taken up and enlarged upon points previously made by Eliot and James.

My emphasis in this study is upon recreative criticism, a critical approach to a literary work, which Coleridge, Eliot and James formulate. Such an approach respects the integrity of a given work and disregards external sources of evidence such as biography, psychology, or sociology. After establishing that images constitute the life of the fictional worlds of both George Eliot and Henry James as well as the individual parts of an organic unity, I develop a theory of imagery which calls for abandoning the traditional categories of images, and shows how we can feel what Coleridge calls 'freshness of sensation' and experience the reconciliations of the imagination in a novel.

The images of a novel, both Eliot and James teach, are the means by which a writer's and a reader's imaginations merge. The path from the writer's, to the character's, to the reader's imagination is a very simple but a wondrous one: this is the direction I have taken in my approach to Middlemarch and The Portrait of a Lady. These two masterpieces appealingly embody the philosophical and aesthetical notions which both writers share; furthermore, they depict how imaginative reconciliations capture aesthetic and psychological integrations.

For the sake of consistency I have used as far as possible the Penguin English Library series of novels by George Eliot and the 1922 reprint of the New York edition of novels and short stories by Henry James (with the exception of The Bostonians for which I have used the

1966 Penguin edition). References to these works are to these editions given after quotations in the text in brackets, without 'p.' preceding page numbers. When referring to James's novels in more than one volume, I have used the Roman numeral II, before Arabic numbers when quoting from the second volume of a novel; Arabic numbers without a Roman numeral preceding them refer to the first volume.

Quotations from Bachelard's French works are my translations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in the text are followed by page numbers without a 'p' preceding them.

- AN Henry James, The Art of the Novel, edited by Richard Blackmur (London, 1939)
- BL Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, edited by J. Shawcross, 2 vols (London, 1907)
- CCL Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (London, 1956-71)
- CCW The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by W. G. T. Shedd, 7 vols (New York, 1884)
- CCW, Coburn The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (London, 1969-78)
- Essays Essays of George Eliot, edited by Thomas Pinney (London, 1963)
- GEL The George Eliot Letters, edited by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (London, 1954-78)
- HJL The Letters of Henry James, selected and edited by Percy Lubbock, 2 vols (London, 1920)
- HJL, Edel The Letters of Henry James, edited by Leon Edel, 4 vols (London, 1974-80)
- MP John Ruskin, Modern Painters, in The Works of John Ruskin, edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, Library edition, 39 vols (London, 1903-12), III-VII
- NN Henry James, Notes on Novelists (London, 1914)
- NR Henry James, Notes and Reviews, edited by Pierre de Chaignon de la Rose (Cambridge, Mass., 1921)
- PP Henry James, Partial Portraits (London, 1888 rept. 1894)

- PR Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, translated by Daniel Russell (Boston, 1969)
- PS Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, translated by Maria Jolas (Boston, 1969)
- SC Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, edited by Thomas Middleton Raysor (London, 1930)
- TS George Eliot, Theophrastus Such, in The Works of George Eliot, Standard edition, 24 vols (Edinburgh, 1878-85)
- VR Henry James, Views and Reviews, edited by Le Roy Phillips (New York, 1908, rept. 1968)

INTRODUCTION

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE READER

Coleridge's high admiration, and lavish praise for Wordsworth's poetry not only highlight his fellow-poet's 'excellences', but also distinctly crystallize Coleridge's own ideas of an artist's role in society. His sensitive response to Wordsworth's poetry embodies his own belief in the true artist's responsibility to train man to respond to, and derive pleasure from, simple, ordinary, insignificant occurrences. It was precisely for this attempt to awaken man's latent sensibility that in Biographia Literaria (1817) he called Wordsworth a genius, distinguished for his ability 'to carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar', and 'so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them and that freshness of

sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence' (BL, I, 59-60). Mental and physical 'convalescence' derived from an active interchange with nature, unorthodox perception triggering imagination, are no doubt beliefs strongly held by Romantics and Victorians alike, concepts which, as we shall see, are especially crucial and vital in nineteenth-century novels.

But why such an emphasis on a unique perspective on our daily lives? Imagination for both Coleridge and Wordsworth represented a noble power which could solve major problems, redress wrongs of the times. Parts of Wordsworth's preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1801) accurately describe not only issues current in the nineteenth century, but also some of the maladies of our own times, significant reasons for the anxious, restless, discontented modern temperament. To Wordsworth, man's decision to uproot his mind from Nature's vital, dynamic processes, in order to implant it in sterile, sophisticated urban surroundings, resulted in a dull sensibility, a state of 'almost savage torpor'. Such a state, he attributed primarily to the 'increasing accumulation of men in the cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident.... To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves'.¹ Indeed, a century ago Wordsworth

¹Poetical Works, edited by Thomas Hutchinson (London, 1975), p. 735.

distinctly saw what modern psychologists like Erich Fromm and Rollo May, have, in recent times, sharply described.² The monotony and enervating routine of modern occupations, so these writers have often pointed out, have reduced man to an apathetic automaton that can be shaken out of its inertia only by violent stimulus. It is to gratify what Wordsworth trenchantly rendered as 'degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation' that gruesome crimes today occupy headlines on the front pages of our newspapers, are the first items of news to be announced and, eventually, are often transformed into scripts of sensational popular movies.

Yet Wordsworth and Coleridge believed that man's divine part, his nobility and dignity, could not possibly be entirely destroyed, but could be revived, restored, and nourished by the artist. Even though approaches, methods, themes, and forms, whether in poetry or in fiction, may vary radically from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the belief in the artist's enchanting power to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary remains the same. Only he can cure our blindness to beauty, and at times capture us and hold us spellbound at the sight of objects or events which we daily regard with indifference. In somewhat Coleridgean terms, George Eliot makes this issue even more specific; as early as 1855 she believed that the artist's goal should not be to 'theorize illogically' or to 'moralize absurdly', but to

²The Art of Loving (New York, 1957); Man's Search for Himself (London, 1953).

'be a teacher in the sense in which every great artist is a teacher--namely, by giving us his higher sensibility as a medium, a delicate acoustic or optical instrument, bringing home to our coarser senses what would otherwise be unperceived by us' (Essays, 126).

Without a stimulation of our senses, no doubt, comprehension often lacks precision, interest, and pleasure. And in order to refine or to sculpture our 'coarser senses', the literary artist makes greatest use of images, because images are the bridges with which our minds and the literary artist's mind are connected. Indeed, our daily world and the fictional world interchange whenever images appear.

Like a poet, a novelist builds, weaves, sometimes sketches, and very often draws or paints images. More appealingly, more vividly, and, certainly, more effusively than any other novelist, Henry James has expounded the affinities between fiction and painting. Very early in his career in 1884, he succinctly expressed the belief which permeates his critical and fictional writings; for him, 'the analogy between the art of the painter and art of the novelist is ... complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle), is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other' (PP, 378).

George Eliot, whose affinity to Henry James is one of the primary concerns in this study, was highly aware of 'the picture' as an important vehicle of communication between the novelist and his audience. In a letter to

Frederic Harrison on August 15, 1866, she very definitely remarks: 'I think aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity. But if it ceases to be purely aesthetic--if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram--it becomes the most offensive of all teaching' (GEL, IV, 300). Even Theophrastus Such (1878), although highly theoretical, does not lack pictures. In fact, 'Looking Backward' seems to describe the genesis of Eliot's own philosophical beliefs as an interplay between images and thoughts, a fusion of the physical with the mental world: 'My philosophical notions, such as they are, continually carry me back to the time when the fitful gleams of a spring day used to show me my own shadow ... riding ... over the breezy uplands'. And later on the effect is even more vivid: 'I often smile at my consciousness that certain conservative prepossessions have mingled themselves for me with the influences of our midland scenery, from the tops of the elms down to the buttercups and the little wayside vetches' (34, 36-37). Here, as quite frequently in her novels, it is difficult to determine where images fade and thoughts emerge. Elsewhere, she even states that convictions are images, and that story-telling cannot exist without images: 'The modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images and pictures in grasping the attention ... our earliest, strongest impressions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images' (Essays, 445).

Stories and paintings, then, are founded on the same basis--pictures. Describing the genesis of his own fictions, Henry James very often, as we shall see, believes that a novel or a short story has its origin in 'the image en disponibilité'. For instance, trying to 'retrace and reconstruct' the origin of the germ for The Portrait of a Lady (1880), he very firmly asserts: 'The conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny, had begun with being all my outfit for the large building of "The Portrait of Lady"'. And the image becomes even more distinct as he continues:: 'It came to be a square and spacious house--or has at least seemed so to me in this going over it again; but, such as it is, it had to be put up round my young woman while she stood there in perfect isolation' (AN, 44, 42, 48).

To James and Eliot a novel was meaningless and lifeless without 'the picture'. Consequently, most of their novels can be approached as pictures at an exhibition--an exhibition that has been arranged with sensitively scrupulous care. But an understanding of such an arrangement can be enhanced only through a comprehension of the image-producing faculty. The transformations, transfigurations, and manifestations of this faculty in Middlemarch and The Portrait of a Lady are the main concerns of this study.

To say that imagination is the faculty which produces images seems somewhat redundant. But it is precisely the image-producing function which distinguishes imagination from memory and perception. An understanding of images, their genesis, form, and

transformations, necessitates primarily a comprehension of what we could call their life-cycle, involving perception, memory, and imagination. But this is running ahead, since such is the subject of a later chapter. Here I will only touch upon some very basic distinctions which will define my approach and justify my choice of images as the paths to clearer vistas from which any good novel can be viewed.

Imagination and perception are the most significant subjects in Coleridge's prose and poetry; specifically, in his famous distinction between primary and secondary imagination, Coleridge attributed to imagination a synthetic function: 'It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify' (BL, I, 202). Like Coleridge, George Eliot very often emphasized the creative and holistic force of imagination, believing that 'powerful imagination is not false outward vision, but intense inward representation, and a creative energy constantly fed by susceptibility to the veriest minutiae of experience, which it reproduces and constructs in fresh and fresh [sic] wholes' (TS, 197).

But what exactly constitutes a whole? Anticipating criticism of his ending of The Portrait of a Lady, James remarked that the main objection would be 'that I have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation--that I have left her en l'air--This is both true and false. The whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity--it

groups together'.³ But in 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), Henry James spoke of a different kind of whole--the organic whole: 'this sense of the story being the idea, the starting point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole'. He called this whole 'organic' because he compared it to an organism which for him represented the ideal unity of the novel: 'a novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts' (PP, 400, 392). Years earlier, in 1868, defining form in art, George Eliot also spoke of wholes, stating that 'form ... as distinguished from merely massive impression, must first depend on the discrimination of wholes and then on the discrimination of parts', and she saw the 'highest Form' as 'the highest organism ... the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations with all other phenomena. It is only in this fundamental sense that the word Form can be applied to Art in general'. Her definition of form in relation to the organism, though it did not refer to the form of the novel in particular, is strikingly similar to that of Henry James, especially when she describes the interdependence of parts: 'the outline defining the wholeness of the human body is due to a consensus or

³Notebooks, edited by F. O. Matthiessen and K. B. Murdock (New York, 1947), p. 18.

constant interchange of effects among its parts. It is wholeness not merely of mass but of strict and manifold dependence' (Essays, 432, 433, 435).

It is apparent then that James's famous definition of unity in the novel, in 1884, echoed that of George Eliot's of form in art, in 1868. The two novelists have been long compared and associated with each other but not for their ideas on organic unity. In the comparison of the two, even critics favourable to George Eliot have often found James superior to her, in spite of their conscious and conscientious attempt to approach and evaluate each novelist separately.⁴ F. R. Leavis in The Great Tradition shows the profound effect Eliot had on James, but he asserts that it is difficult to ascertain the kind of influence an author has had on another: 'What one great original artist learns from another, whose genius and problems are necessarily very different, is the hardest kind of "influence" to define, even when we see it to have been of the profoundest importance'.⁵ Acknowledging Leavis's above assertion, my aim is to show in what ways the concept of organicism is related to imagination, and how an understanding of the two can enhance our appreciation of George Eliot's and Henry James's novels.

⁴See for example, W. J. Harvey, The Art of George Eliot (London, 1961), pp. 15, 19, 94-95; Joan Bennett, George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art (London, 1974), p. 196.

⁵(London, 1977), pp. 24-26, 18-19.

Modern critics have often used the word 'organic', but quite frequently they have avoided fully defining or examining it. René Wellek, for example, is somewhat suspicious of the term, and believes 'organicism' to be 'misleading, since it stresses only one aspect, that of "unity in variety", and leads to biological parallels not always relevant'.⁶ Barbara Hardy often uses the term without defining its implications. In her book The Appropriate Form, she alludes to Henry James's use of the term, 'organic form', but she concludes that the term has 'outlived its usefulness'; yet she often employs the term in her two later books, Critical Essays on George Eliot and Tellers and Listeners.⁷ Referring to Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady, Washington Square (1880), and The Bostonians (1886), F. R. Leavis points out that these books 'have the abundant, full-blooded life of well-nourished organisms'.⁸ Joan Bennett, in her book on George Eliot, uses the term in a still different sense.: First, to show the development of a character: 'it is the growth of the plant, the gradual unfolding of character in its environment, that compels attention, not the mere concatenation of events'; and secondly, to define the relationship of an individual's life to his social milieu--'an inner circle ... surrounded by an outer circle'.⁹

⁶Theory of Literature, (Middlesex, 1978), p. 27.

⁷(London, 1964), p. 30; (London, 1970), p. x; (London, 1975), p. 5.

⁸p. 187.

⁹pp. 77, 101.

Whereas most critics use the term rather loosely and generally, David Cecil, in his Early Victorian Novelists, implicitly and perhaps unintentionally, refers to a distinction with which romantic critics who developed the concept of organicism were closely concerned. Comparing George Eliot's plots to those of Jane Austen's, he remarks 'we do not feel them to have grown naturally from their situation like a flower, but to have been put together deliberately and calculatedly like a building'.¹⁰

The distinction between mechanical and organic was one of Coleridge's primary concerns in his Biographia Literaria, as well as in his Shakespearean Criticism (1836-39). In the latter, he distinguishes between organic and mechanical talent, defining mechanical as the ability to conceive parts separately and to put them together afterwards. Form, in this case, is imposed on the material rather than arising out of it. By contrast, organic form is 'innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within' (SC, I, 198).

Very often Coleridge defines organic unity in terms of the dependence of the whole on its parts. Poetry, he explains in Biographia Literaria is an 'imitative' art and 'imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the SAME throughout the radically DIFFERENT, or of the different throughout a base radically the same' (II, 56). The principle of 'sameness in variety' or of 'unity in multiteity' is another

¹⁰first edition (New York, 1935), p. 331.

important concept of organicism, which Coleridge also includes in his definition of beauty. In this case the emphasis is on the interdependence of the parts. Beauty, he very definitely declares, is 'THE REDUCTION OF MANY TO ONE'; and he continues: 'The sense of beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to the whole' (BL, II, 238-39). It is important that Coleridge expanded the meaning of organic unity to encompass, besides poetry, 'works in all the branches of the fine arts' (BL, II, 261-62).

The interdependence between the parts and the whole is an important concept in modern definitions of organicism. For James Benziger, to take one example, organic unity 'is a comparison of the unity of a work of art to that unity which ordinary men imagine they perceive in a tree, a unity which is the expression of one indwelling force or spirit'; for M. H. Abrams, as for Benziger, organicism is the philosophy 'whose major categories are derived metaphorically from the attributes of living and growing things'.¹¹ But Orsini adds another dimension by objecting to Abrams's definition; organicism, Orsini believes, ought to be defined, instead, as an 'aesthetic doctrine whose major category is the synthetic unity of a multiplicity, to be found, actually and literally, in works of art, and only metaphorically, and so less exactly, in living beings'. In support of this assertion he cites Plato's definition

¹¹'Organic Unity: Leibniz to Coleridge', PMLA, 66, no. 2 (March 1951), 24-48 (p. 33); The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (London, 1960), p. 168.

which likens, rather than equates, a work of art to an organism, in order to facilitate our understanding, but the simile itself is not indispensable to the definition of organic unity.¹² Thus Orsini liberates the theory of organicism from the 'biological parallels not always relevant'--Wellek's objection, and typical of critical scepticism about organicism.

Yet the simile of organism does elucidate our understanding of two important tenets of the theory of organicism: 'incompleteness', and synthesis of 'diverse materials'. An organic growth is an open-ended process, Abrams explains, so should a work of art nurture 'a sense of the promise of the incomplete, and the glory of the imperfect'. And as 'a plant assimilates the most diverse materials of earth and air, so the synthetic power of imagination "reveals itself", in Coleridge's famous phrase, "in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities"'.¹³

Whether it be the assimilation of 'diverse materials', or the reconciliation of opposites, organicism does share with imagination a synthetic or an integrative quality. It is not then unreasonable to assume that organicism is an outgrowth of the synthetic function of the imagination or, rather, that it is a philosophy which seeks to explain the way the imagination integrates 'diverse' or 'discordant' qualities. Integration is the principle of organicism which Stephen

¹² 'The Organic Concepts of Aesthetics', Comparative Literature, 21, no. 1 (Winter 1969), 1-30 (p. 27).

¹³ p. 220.

Pepper examines in his book The Basis of Criticism in the Arts, demonstrating that under this principle observations which seemed unconnected turn out to be integral parts of the whole, and an inability to perceive them as such is seen by the organicist as 'the weakness of the spectator'. Such a theory, Pepper claims, leads to a recreative criticism, according to which 'artist, critic, and spectator all come intimately together ... for they all have the common enterprise of finding the maximum integration and satisfaction for the materials before them'.¹⁴ And the most significant aim of recreative criticism is to enhance the pleasure derived from our encounters with the literary world by showing us the ways we can bridge the distance between the author's and the reader's imagination.

The value of organicism as a critical theory has been expressed by critics like Cleanth Brooks, who sees organicism as the basis of practical criticism, and attributes to it 'the best hope that we have for reviving the study of poetry and of the humanities generally'.¹⁵ Basic to our comprehension of organicism as a critical theory, Orsini remarks, is our understanding of the difference between organic unity and organic form. 'Organic unity', he believes, 'consists in the harmony of the parts of a work with the whole and with each other, as in a living body (organic simile), the parts being

¹⁴ (Cambridge, Massachussetts, 1949), pp. 74, 89.

¹⁵ 'Irony and "Ironical" Poetry', College English, 9, no. 5 (February 1948), 231-37 (p. 237).

materially separable (as in a living body), such as the lines or stanzas of a poem, the words of a sentence, the sentences of a text.... But organic form is not materially separable from its content, and is present in all the parts of the whole'. Elsewhere, Orsini further delineates the advantages as well as the problems of such a critical concept. To begin with, under such a theory, one has to derive one's judgement of value from an analysis of the work itself, and such an approach eliminates subjective judgement as well as reliance on external sources of evidence, such as sociology or psychology. Furthermore, the organic principle respects the individuality of a work of art because it cannot determine in advance the 'division or character of the parts'. But determining which are the actual parts of a given work is the primary difficulty of this approach.¹⁶

Before deciding which are the constituents of a novel, we ought to look more closely at some of the principles of organicism which we have isolated so far. 'Unity in multitude' implies the relationship of the parts to the whole, their integration or synthesis into the whole, but also their mutual interdependence as well as their independence from the whole as complete or 'rounded' units. Furthermore, we have observed that imagination and organic unity display a synthetic quality.

¹⁶ 'Coleridge and Schlegel Reconsidered', Comparative Literature, 16, no. 2 (Spring 1964), 97-118 (p. 113); 'The Organic Concepts of Aesthetics', pp. 5-6, 10.

Perception and imagination also share a synthetic quality. Following experiments on visual perception, Ulric Neisser concludes that the 'perceiver synthesizes a model or schema of the scene before him using information from each successive fixation to add detail or to extend construction. This constructed whole is what guides his movements'. Because of the constructive rather than copying process of perception, Neisser explains, it is difficult to defend the long-held assumption of students of perception that dreams and phantasies are 'hallucinatory' and thus irrelevant to mental seeing', because 'logically a sharp distinction between perception and hallucination would be easy enough if perception were copies of the retinal image; hallucinations would then be experiences that do not copy that image. But since perception does more than mirror the stimulus (and since hallucinations often incorporate stimulus information), this distinction is not clear-cut. Moreover, a number of recent findings seem to point up very specific relations between the processes of seeing and of imagining'.¹⁷

With this in mind, we can readily accept Gaston Bachelard's invitation to consider 'literary documents as realities of the imagination ... as real as those of perception' (PS, 158). Or to see the literary image as vivid and lively as a perceptual image.

Since both Henry James and George Eliot believed that the literary work of art is based on images, and since we have already seen that imagination is the image-

¹⁷ 'The Processes of Vision', Scientific American, 219, no. 3 (September 1968), 204-214 (pp. 208, 210).

producing and integrating faculty, it is not unreasonable to accept images as being the 'parts' of their novels. Images display the 'interfusion of the same' (imagination, governing idea) throughout the 'radically different' (each image); they are interdependent (emerging from each other, deriving their significance from the whole); independent or rounded (since they can be regarded separately); and incomplete (they cannot be fully understood in isolation from the whole).

But the license permitting us to enter a novel should involve an exchange of the subjective or objective critical alternatives for what Bachelard calls a state of 'non-knowing' which 'is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge' (PS, xxviii-xxix). For Bachelard the essence of our enjoyment of images depends on our ability to 'dephilosophize' ourselves, in order to experience 'the shocks that being receives from new images, shocks which are always the phenomena of youthful being' (PS, 236). His motto in Poetics of Space that images should 'be lived directly', that they should 'be taken as sudden events in life' (p. 47), certainly seems congenial to Coleridge's 'sense of wonder' and 'freshness of sensation'. But, what is even more important to this study is the fact that Bachelard's goal clearly echoes Eliot's purpose in Middlemarch (1871) and James's aim in The Portrait of a Lady. Unless we are willing to see, so James suggests, we cannot look at Isabel's portrait. And unless we are willing to abandon our 'theoretic' nature, or unless we are eager to perceive the physical world of Middlemarch, Eliot

indicates, we will fail to grasp the significance of the book, just as Dorothea fails whenever she does not see what she looks at.

CHAPTER 1

'LOSING THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF WORDS'

'Should children', Coleridge asks in a letter to Thomas Poole (1797), 'be permitted to read Romances, and Relations of Giants and Magicians, and Genii?' And he answers: 'I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of "the Great" and "the Whole"' (CCL, I, 384). More than a hundred years later, Bruno Bettelheim was advocating the same view in his book The Uses of Enchantment. A holistic perspective has often been adopted by nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophers and scientists.¹ Carlyle, for instance, speaks of society as a whole and man as its integral part: 'Society was (in the days of Roman Republic) what we call whole, in both senses of the word. The individual man was in himself a whole, a complete union; and could combine with his

¹(London, 1976). See for example, D. C. Phillips, 'Organicism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century', Journal of the History of Ideas, XXXI, no. 3 (July-September 1970), 413-32; Joseph Needham, 'S. T. Coleridge as a Philosophical Biologist', Science Progress, 20, (1926), 692-702.

fellows as the living member of a greater whole'; and the individual's work, so he believes, 'lies not isolated, stranded; a whole busy World, a whole native-element of mysterious never-resting Force, environs it; will catch it up; will carry it forward, or else backward'.² In a similar vein, T. S. Eliot states that individual works can be better interpreted and appreciated when regarded as parts of a cultural whole: 'I thought of literature then', he says in 'The Function of Criticism', 'as I think of it now, of the literature of the world, of the literature of Europe, of the literature of a single country, not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as "organic wholes", as systems in relation to which ... individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists have their significance'.³

That Coleridge's influence can be traced in all these fields is, of course, a matter difficult to ascertain, especially since the idea of organicism was first developed by Plato. Coleridge, has, nevertheless, been recognized as 'the father of holism in English criticism', and he, more clearly and fully than modern organicists, developed a theory of art and literary criticism in his aesthetical essays, 'On Taste', 'The

²Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished, 4 vols (London, 1857), III, 12, IV, 11.

³Selected Essays, 1917-1932, first edition (New York, 1932), pp. 12-13

Principles of Genial Criticism', and 'On Beauty'.⁴ His comments in Biographia Literaria and Shakespearean Criticism, I believe, often elucidate some of the ideas expressed in his essays and are especially relevant to George Eliot's and Henry James's organic theory of the novel.

We have already briefly touched upon Eliot's and James's concept of an organic whole. In this chapter we will examine some of the most important concepts of organic unity, such as balance or proportion, feeling, germ, and reconciliation of opposites; furthermore, we will explore some of the ideas which, besides organic form and organic unity, are necessary for the composition of a given work.

George Eliot's knowledge of Coleridge is evident in her many references to him in her letters and critical essays. In an early letter to Maria Lewis (1841), she promises to make some 'delicious extracts' of Coleridge (GEL, I, 136), and a year later, she claims: 'I feel with Coleridge, that the notion of Revelation abandoned, there is ever a tendency towards Pantheism, and the personality of the Deity is not to be maintained quite satisfactorily apart from Christianity' (GEL, I, 136). Her intimate knowledge of Coleridge is evident when we see that he

⁴W. K. Wimsatt, ed., Explication as Criticism (London, 1963), p. 5.

says, 'as we recede from anthropomorphism we must go either to the Trinity or Pantheism'.⁵

Quite frequently, her comments on Coleridge are condenscending, as, for instance, in her allusion to Carlyle's Life of Sterling, which, she writes to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, contains 'an inimitable description of Coleridge and his eternal monologue, "To sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into, whether one like it or not, can in the end be exhilarating to no creature"' (GEL, I, 370). And in a letter to Elma Stuart, she comments in the same spirit, 'but I will not be like Coleridge and talk humility, which somehow never is active when one thinks one's audience likely to assent' (GEL, VI, 82). Her review of Collier's Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton (1857) is also diminishing: 'Coleridge was not so great a man that every scrap of his must needs be interesting; indeed the public is already in possession of volumes published by himself which it declines to read; and these scraps of lectures would scarcely gain admittance into any good periodical if they were now offered as original articles'.⁶ Yet even these disparaging remarks reveal that Eliot had read Coleridge very closely. But besides Coleridge, Eliot was also familiar with A. W. Schlegel, Goethe, and Kant, all of them writers who first explored some of the organic ideas

⁵Anima Poetae, edited by E. H. Coleridge (London, 1895), p. 14.

⁶'Belles Lettres', Westminster Review, American edition, 67 (January 1857), 306-326 (pp. 319-20).

on which Coleridge based his own philosophy and aesthetics.

Henry James was familiar with Coleridge too. This is especially evident in his preface to 'The Coxon Fund' (1894), the subject of which, he muses, 'has long been with me, but was, beyond doubt, to have found its interest clinched by my perusal ... of Mr. J. Dyke Campbell's admirable monograph on S. T. Coleridge. The wondrous figure of that genius had long haunted me and circumstances into which I needn't here enter had within a few years contributed much to making it vivid' (AN, 229). No doubt James's 'My Friend Bingham' (1867) with its explicit and implicit allusions to 'The Ancient Mariner' also owes its germ to Coleridge. James's prefaces, his own Biographia Literaria, as Percy Lubbock calls them, are permeated with organic terms and definitions. Naturally, authorities on organicism, such as René Wellek and Richard Fogle have recognized James as an important spokesman of organicism, or appropriately, as Fogle calls him, a 'thoroughgoing organicist'.⁷

The powerful effect of Coleridge's organic theory on Henry James and George Eliot becomes even more striking when we consider for a moment Coleridge's analogy between the human mind and a living plant, the analogue which, as

⁷The Letters of Henry James, 2 vols (London, 1920), I, xviii. See 'Henry James's Literary Theory and Criticism', American Literature, XXX (1958), 293-321; 'Organic Form in American Criticism: 1840-1870' in Floyd Stovall, ed., The Development of American Literary Criticism (North Carolina, 1955), pp. 75-112 (p. 86).

M. H. Abrams says, was 'destined to alter more drastically the conceptions of mind, art, and the universe than all the apparatus of lamps, fountains, and wind-harps'⁸ :

Lo! with the rising sun it commences its outward life and enters into open communion with all the elements, at once assimilating them to itself and to each other. At the same moment it strikes its roots and unfolds its leaves, absorbs and respire, steams forth its cooling vapor and finer fragrance, and breathes a repairing spirit, at once the food and tone of the atmosphere that feeds it. Lo!--at the touch of light how it returns an air akin to light, and yet with the same pulse effectuates its own secret growth, still contracting to fix what expanding it had refined (CCW, I, 462).

It was precisely the analogy of a plant which Eliot used when she was writing to John Blackwood in 1859 of The Mill on the Floss: 'But my stories grow in me like plants, and this is only in the leaf-bud. I have faith that the flower will come. Not enough faith, though, to make me like the idea of beginning to print till the flower is fairly out--till I know the end as well as the beginning' (GEL, III, 133). Contraction and expansion, internal and external: this is a rhythm crucial not only to The Mill on the Floss (1860) but to her other novels, as we shall see.

James's concern with the same vital rhythm is primary in his novels and is often explicitly articulated

⁸The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 68.

in his critical prefaces. Darkness and light, expansion and contraction, are indeed the elements and the forces, we are told, which have determined the growth of the germ of The Portrait of a Lady: 'These are the fascinations of the fabulist's art, these lurking forces of expansion, these necessities of upspringing in the seed, these beautiful determinations, on the part of the idea entertained, to grow as tall as possible, to push into the light and the air and thickly flower there' (AN, 42). The same rhythm exactly permeates his preface to The American (1876); here James's seed seems to grow into Coleridge's plant: 'I was charmed with my idea ... and precisely because it had so much to give, I think, must I have dropped it for the time into the deep well of unconscious cerebration; not without, the hope, doubtless, that it might eventually emerge from the reservoir, as one had already known the buried treasure to come to light, with a firm iridescent surface and a notable increase of weight' (AN, 23).

For Coleridge a plant or a tree remained a fascinating figure, which he often used to illustrate his conceptions of life, poetry, and beauty. Parts and their interrelationships, 'the many, still seen as many', becoming one are the primary concerns in Coleridge's definition of beauty. The frost on a window pane, which by Coleridge's imagination is transformed into a tree, distinctly illustrates 'the parts, and their relations to each other, and to the whole! Here is the stalk ... and here the branches ... or flowers. Nor will our pleasure

be less, should the caprice of the crystallization represent some object disagreeable, to us, provided only we can see or fancy the component parts each in relation to each, and all forming a whole' (BL, II, 232). In his view beauty is inextricably bound to pleasure and a poet's duty should be to imitate only the beautiful in nature, which he defined as 'the union of the shapely (formosum) with the vital' (BL, II, 257). In the organic, Coleridge emphasized, beauty is not 'mere regularity of form', since 'it may be present in a disagreeable object, in which the proportion of the parts constitutes a whole; it does not arise from association ... but sometimes lies in the rupture of association' (BL, II, 257).

Both George Eliot and Henry James believed that the novelist ought to create and shape the beautiful. Beauty and form are Eliot's concerns in her essay on Wilhelm Meister in 1855: 'A ray of sunlight falling on the dreariest sandbank will often serve the painter for a fine picture; the tragedian may take for his subject the most hideous passions if they serve as the background for one divine deed of tenderness or heroism, and so the novelist may place before us every aspect of human life where there is some trait of love, or endurance or helplessness to call forth our best sympathies' (Essays, 146). For James too a great work of art 'must lift up the reader's heart' and a subject which is 'morally hideous' should be avoided in preference for 'moral beauty' (NR, 225-26).

Beauty, furthermore, Coleridge believed to be independent of proportion, as is the case of a beautiful swan: 'We ask not what proportion the neck bears to the body;--through all the changes of graceful motion it brings itself into unity, as an harmonious part of an harmonious whole. The very word "part" imperfectly conveys what we see and feel; for the moment we look at it in division, the charm ceases' (BL, II, 245). Since their work quite frequently seems to move ahead of them, it is small wonder that both George Eliot and Henry James saw beauty as independent of proportion. George Eliot, for instance, succumbs to the 'imperious activity' the germ of a new work has within her (GEL, V, 388). Specifically in reference to Middlemarch (1870), she speaks about beginning a story, 'Miss Brooke', 'without any very serious intention of carrying it out lengthily. It is a subject which has been recorded among my possible themes ever since I began to write fiction, but will probably take new shapes in the development' (GEL, V, 124). In a similar vein, Henry James claims that he originally conceived of The Sacred Fount as a short story but saw it growing 'by a rank force of its own' into a book (HJL, I, 408).

If the author is to allow a book to 'grow by a force of its own', then it is only natural that he should not worry about proportion. This is well illustrated by some comments James makes in his preface to The Tragic Muse (1889), where, he admits, 'again and again, perversely, incurably, the centre of my structure would insist on

placing itself not, so to speak, in the middle'.

Proportion, undoubtedly, has not been one of his goals in the composition of his novels: 'I urge myself to the confession that in very few of my productions, to my eye, has the organic centre succeeded in getting into proper position' (AN, 85). Like Coleridge, Eliot too was sensitive to the effect created by the part seen 'in division' and thought in 1873 that critics who judge a work as a whole were rare; most of them, she regretted, 'pick out morsels to suit their own palate' (GEL, V, 373). In the same year, in a letter to her editor, John Blackwood, she urges her readers to adopt a holistic perspective: 'Unless my readers are more moved towards the ends I seek by my works as wholes than by an assemblage of extracts, my writings are a mistake' (GEL, V, 458-59).

To illustrate the interdependence of the parts and the whole Coleridge quite often chose the figure of the circle. One of his examples included an old coach wheel 'disfigured with tart and dirt'. Yet if we '"regard the figure abstractly"', he says to an imaginary companion, '"there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before. See how the rays proceed from the centre to the circumferences, and how many different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance, as forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation to each and to all"' (BL, II, 232-33). Later on he vividly demonstrates how the circle is the configuration which

determines the beauty in Raphael's 'Galatea'; the circle, he says, is 'perceived at first sight; but with what multiplicity of rays and chords within the area of the circular group, with what elevations and depressions of circumference ... is the balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and the confining FORM!'

(BL, II, 234-35). The figure of the circle and its meaning is even better elucidated in one of Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare, in which he compares Shakespeare with a geometrician, who 'when tracing a circle, had his eye upon the centre as the important point, but included also in his vision a wide circumference; so Shakespeare, while his eye rested upon an individual character, always embraced a wide circumference of others, without diminishing the separate interest he intended to attach to the being he portrayed' (SC, II, 33-34).

Circles are identified with nature in the 'Essay on Beauty'. Without curvilinear lines, Coleridge declares, rectilinear lines are mechanical and lifeless, 'the determined ab extra.... The curve line is a modification of the force from without by the force from within, or the spontaneous. These are not arbitrary symbols, but the language of nature, universal and intuitive' (BL, II, 251). Coleridge amplifies the significance of circles in the 'law of bicentrality' in nature, according to which 'every Whole, whether without parts, or composed of parts ... must be conceived as a possible centre in itself, and at the same time as having a centre out of itself and

common to it with all other parts of the same System'. Philip Ritterbush, a modern organicist, also sees the 'curvilinear motifs' in painting as 'images of growth, interdependence of parts, and differentiation directed from within'.⁹

The figure of the circle was often appealing to George Eliot; it is the 'sphere of art', for instance, to which she refers in her essay on Wilhelm Meister. In Middlemarch it is easy to see how the law of bicentrality could be applied to the depiction of her characters, since each character can be seen as having a 'centre' in himself and 'at the same time as having a centre out' of himself, and 'common to it with all other parts of the same System' (society). Alluding to Dorothea as an example, the narrator in the novel explains, 'we are all of us born in moral stupidity taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves'. And she proceeds with Dorothea's case: 'Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling--an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects--that

⁹Quoted by Gordon McKenzie in Organic Unity in Coleridge (Berkeley, 1939), p. 41; 'Organic Form: Aesthetics and Objectivity in the Study of Form in the Life Sciences', in Organic Form: The Life of an Idea, edited by G. S. Rousseau (London, 1972), pp. 25-59 (p. 52).

he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference' (p. 243). In this case George Eliot directly connects bicentrality with an organic expression, 'to feed'.

But more fully than George Eliot, Henry James has elaborated the figure of the circle as the figure of unity in a novel. 'Really, universally, relations stop nowhere', he says in the preface to Roderick Hudson, 'and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so' (AN, 5). In this case, James compares the artist with a geometrician, exactly as Coleridge does in his description of Shakespeare. In his preface to The Wings of the Dove (1902), James admits that he has always proceeded by centres and sees this as 'the logic' of a 'superior process' (AN, 300). The centre of the novel is most often placed in the consciousness of the most important character, as he says in his account of the germ of The Portrait of a Lady: '"Place the centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness", I said to myself' (AN, 51). And in his criticism of other novelists, the centre is most frequently his criterion of excellence. Thus, for instance, he praises Howard Sturgis for 'sticking to the real line and centre of your theme--the consciousness and view of Sainty himself, and your dealing with things, with the whole fantasmogoria, as presented to him only, not otherwise going behind them' (HJL, I, 429). The significance of the centre, as the key to composition, is

revealed in his preface to The Tragic Muse (1889), where it is called 'the organic centre' (AN, 85). And the building of the novel through a centre and a circle is given in detail in his preface to The Awkward Age (1899): 'I drew on a sheet of paper ... the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects' (AN, 110). This process clearly echoes once again Coleridge's analogy between Shakespeare and a geometrician.

On this principle of unity, Coleridge also believed, depends the writer's success at holding the reader's attention: 'In order to derive pleasure from the occupation of the mind, the principle of unity must always be present, so that in the midst of the multiteity the centripetal force be never suspended, nor the sense be fatigued by the predominance of the centrifugal force. This unity in multiteity I have elsewhere stated as the principle of beauty' (BL, II, 262). Also referring to reading, though in a different sense, Northrop Frye in The Anatomy of Criticism echoes Coleridge when he says, 'whenever we read anything, we find our attention moving in two directions at once. One direction is outward or centrifugal, in which we keep going outside our reading, from the individual words to the things they mean....

The other direction is inward, or centripetal, in which we try to develop from the words a sense of the larger verbal pattern they make.... In all literary verbal structures the final direction of meaning is inward'.¹⁰

In Shakespearean Criticism the figure of the circle is even more significant, for Coleridge identifies the main characters with the centre of the play from which the rest should evolve. His lectures and notes on Shakespeare are valuable sources for anyone exploring the philosophy of organicism; there Coleridge, more fully than in any of his other works, defines the meaning of the germ and the principle of the reconciliation of opposites, both significant principles of organic unity. Repeatedly, Coleridge praises Shakespeare for his characters, because they are 'never introduced for the sake of the plot, but his plot arises out of his characters' (SC, II, 315). At another point, in some lecture notes on Shakespeare's characteristics, Coleridge remarks that we are interested in the plot only as it reveals the characters: 'Shakespeare did not take the trouble of inventing stories. It is the man himself that Shakespeare for the first time makes us acquainted with' (SC, I, 226).

George Eliot seems to be summarizing all these points very early in her career in a letter to John Blackwood in 1857, where she declares, 'but I am unable to alter anything in relation to the delineation or

¹⁰ (London, 1957), pp. 73-74.

development of character, as my stories grow out of my psychological conception of the *dramatis personae*. For example the behaviour of Caterina in the gallery is essential to my conception of her nature and to the development of that nature in the plot' (GEL, II, 299). Similarly, Henry James stated in 1884 in his 'Art of Fiction', that there should not be a distinction between novels of character and those of plot, since 'when one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?' (PP, 392). Referring to the same distinction, in an essay on Trollope in 1883, James declares: 'character, in any sense in which we can get at it, is action, and action is plot, and any plot which hangs together, even if it pretend to interest us only in the fashion of a Chinese puzzle, plays upon our emotion, our suspense, by means of personal references' (PP, 106). Thus James echoes Coleridge not only in his belief that plot should grow from the character, but also in connecting the character with action, and, in turn, in relating action to the reader's emotional involvement. Through Hamlet, Coleridge says, 'Shakespeare wished to impress upon us the truth, that action is the chief end of existence--that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from,

or render us repugnant to action, and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually' (SC, II, 197).

Coleridge's objection to a plot superimposed upon a play was congruous with his idea of organic or vital form as developing ab intra. To the organic or vital was also connected his belief that Shakespeare 'became Othello, and spoke as Othello, in such circumstances, must have spoken' (SC, II, 136). Genius, according to Coleridge, 'imitated', did not 'copy' nature and this is why Shakespeare 'makes men on the stage what they are in nature, in a moment transports himself into the very being of each personage, and, instead of cutting out artificial puppets, he brings before us the men themselves' (SC, II, 171). Echoing Coleridge, but sounding much more modern and matter-of-fact, George Eliot also used character presentation as a basis for her distinction between a genius and a writer in 1856: 'Doubtless there is a great deal of nonsense talked about genius and inspiration, as if genius did not and must not labour; but, after all, there remains the difference between the writer who thoroughly possesses you by his creation, and the writer who only awakens your curiosity and makes you recognise his ability; and this difference may as well be called "genius" as anything else. Perhaps a truer statement of the difference is, that the one writer is himself thoroughly possessed by his creation--he lives in his characters; while the other remains outside them and dresses them up' (Essays, 329).

As in poetry so in drama Coleridge believed feeling to be the unifying force. His comments on Romeo and Juliet describe the significance of feeling especially well:

A unity of feeling pervades the whole of his plays. In Romeo and Juliet all is youth and spring--it is youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; it is spring with its odours, flowers, and transiency:--the same feeling commences, goes through, and ends the play. The old men, the Capulets and Montagues, are not common old men; they have an eagerness, a hastiness, a precipitancy--the effect of spring.... With Juliet love has all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring; but it ends with a long deep sigh, like the breeze of the evening. This unity of character pervades the whole of his dramas (SC, II, 265).

Feeling is often expressed in terms of contrasting or opposing qualities within a character, as in York's personality where we see 'the weakness of old age and the overwhelmingness of circumstance struggling with his sense of duty; and the function of both exhibited in boldness of words and feebleness in act. How (like all Shakespeare's plays) the characters are connected, all by likeness or contrast' (SC, I, 154). In Romeo and Juliet we see the contrast between Tybalt and Capulet in the first act when we witness 'the old man's impetuosity at once contrasting , yet harmonized with the young Tybalt's' (SC, I, 7).

George Eliot too saw contrast as the fundamental element of organic unity. In her article 'Liszt, Wagner

and Weimar' (1855), the Coleridgean overtones are striking: 'certainly Wagner has admirably fulfilled his own requisition of organic unity in the opera. In his operas there is a gradual unfolding and elaboration of that fundamental contrast of emotions, that collision of forces, which is the germ of the tragedy; just as the leaf of the plant is successively elaborated into branching stem and compact bud and radiant corolla' (Essays, 104). Contrast and organic unity are fused in James's preface to The Tragic Muse: 'the happy and fruitful truth, at all events, was that there was opposition--why there should be was another matter--and that the opposition would beget an infinity of situations' (AN, 80).

For Coleridge too contrast is fundamental to the growth of a composition, and his definition of the germ is remarkably similar to that of James and Eliot. The intense conflict within Hamlet's character, for instance, his attention to 'outward objects' contrasted with his 'meditation on inward thoughts' is the opposition from which, Coleridge affirms, all the other characters in the play develop. But even when speaking of Shakespeare's plays in general, Coleridge describes a character or a play as being the germ of a later one. In Richard III, for example, we are told, we can see Bolingbroke contrasted to Richard, and at the same time we can see the germs which were fully developed later on in Henry IV. Organic unity is even tighter in Shakespeare's historical plays: Henry IV is in a way the germ of Henry

V; 'and the whole of Gloucester's character in Henry VI. is so different from any other that we are prepared for Richard III' (SC, II, 281). We can see how this could be true of James's and Eliot's works. Quite explicitly Henry James admits that Christina Light in Roderick Hudson was the germ of Princess Casamassima. The interrelationships among the characters of the different novels by James or by Eliot are at times evident. It is not difficult, for instance, to see how Maggie Tulliver's renouncing nature could be the germ of Romola, and how Romola, in turn, anticipates Dorothea, or how Gwendolen echoes Dorothea.

The germ of a play, Coleridge believes, appears in the first scenes. Speaking of Richard II, he applauds 'the judgement with which Shakespeare always in his first scenes prepares, and yet how naturally and with what a concealment of art, for the catastrophe. How he presents the germ of all the after events in Richard's insincerity, partiality, arbitrariness, favoritism, and in the proud tempestuous temperament of his barons' (SC, I, 153). George Eliot seems to refer to precisely the same idea in 1855 in her definition of an organic whole, which she describes as growing 'like a palm, its earliest portion containing the germ and prevision of all the rest' (Essays, 102).

Since Shakespeare conceived his characters, as Coleridge often points out, in terms of an opposition, it follows that the germ could often embody a contrast or an

opposition. This idea is consistent with Coleridge's concept of organic unity as Richard Fogle claims:

Coleridge's method of analysis may be deduced from his doctrine of organic unity. He looks first for an informing principle, correspondent to the all-pervading life of an organic body: the "germ" that contains the oak potentially the completed form, as the acorn contains the oak. The principle or germ appears intelligibly (since reality is intelligible only in the form of polar opposites) as an an opposition; in drama, for example, it appears as a dislocation in the hero's mind which is the source of the drama's action. This dislocation is psychological, a disproportion of mental faculties.¹¹

Coleridge, then, saw the germ of a play as appearing in its first scenes, and he identified the germ with opposition embodied in the main character. This opposition is psychological, in other words it involves emotions. Speaking of Edmund he points out that 'he is the known and acknowledged son of the princely Gloster [sic]. Edmund, therefore, has both the germ of pride and the conditions best fitted to evolve and ripen it into a predominant feeling' (SC, I, 56). And of Shakespeare's technique in the first scenes of his plays, he says, 'Shakespeare shewed great judgement in his first scenes; they contained the germ of the ruling passion which was to be developed hereafter' (SC, II, 279).

But before examining how Coleridge believed an artist can express feeling, it is worth looking into some

¹¹The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism (Berkeley, 1962), p. 12.

of the ways in which he described oppositions in his literary criticism. Again we have to turn to Hamlet, the character who first stimulated Coleridge's philosophical criticism. 'What then was the point', he asks, 'to which Shakespeare directed himself in Hamlet?' And he answers: 'He intended to portray a person, in whose view the external world, and all its incidents and objects, were comparatively dim, and of no interest in themselves, and which began to interest only, when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind. Hamlet beheld external things in the same way that a man of vivid imagination, who shuts his eyes, sees what has previously made an impression on his organs' (SC, II, 192). It is clear, in this case, that Coleridge sees opposition as the dialectic between the external and the internal, which he clarifies elsewhere as being Hamlet's 'thoughts, images and fancy [being] far more vivid than his perceptions, and his very perceptions instantly passing thro' the medium of his contemplations; and acquiring as they pass a form and color not naturally their own' (SC, I, 37).

External and internal, the rhythm which as we have seen permeates the analogy of the plant, is also the polarity which a genius can reconcile in a work of art, simply by making 'the external internal, the internal external ... nature thought, and thought nature' (BL, II, 258). And in 'every work of art', Coleridge goes on to say, 'there is a reconciliation of the external with the internal; the conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it' (BL, II, 258). The

importance of the dialectic between the external and internal is revealed in Coleridge's analysis of Venus and Adonis. In this case, the outward and inward are seen as constituting the whole: 'It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view' (BL, II, 15).

Another facet of the external-internal opposition is the subject-object dialectic. Art, for Coleridge, is the reconciler of subject and object, or of 'nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, or infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation' (BL, II, 253). Elsewhere, Coleridge expresses this reconciliation more concretely as the fusion between the poet and his subject matter. Such fusion is enacted through intense sympathy as in the case of Wordsworth, whose excellence is evident in the 'Affliction of Margaret': 'Here the man and the poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the other as substantiated' (BL, II, 123).

Twentieth-century critics explain Coleridge's fusion of the subject with the object in terms of an active interchange which results in a higher form of knowledge. I. A. Richards, for instance, explains how the subject and the object exchange places momentarily: 'The subject (the self) has gone into what it perceives,

and what it perceives is, in this sense, itself. So the object becomes the subject and the subject the object'. Through this interchange the subject is somewhat expanded, since 'the subject is what it is through the objects it has been'.¹² In the Romantic period, the merging of the subjective with the objective is some kind of creation, the foundation of 'all true knowledge'. This is how Albert Gérard approaches Coleridge's concept of 'vital knowledge'; such a knowledge, Gérard explains, is possible by a means of an 'intimate fusion' taking place 'between the consciousness and its object' during which 'the percept becomes an integral part of the percipient's mind'. But the subject-object fusion, René Wellek asserts, is only a feature of Romanticism, an 'attempt apparently doomed to failure and abandoned by our time'.¹³

The merging of the subject and the object, though, has not been abandoned by our time, but has been adopted, instead, as a way of explaining different experiences in various fields. An aesthetic experience, for instance, John Dewey claims, cannot be possible unless the observer identifies with the object: 'An esthetic product results only when ideas cease to float and are embodied in an object, and the one who experiences the work of art loses

¹²Coleridge on Imagination (Indiana, 1960), p. 57.

¹³'On the Logic of Romanticism', Essays in Criticism, VII, no. 3 (July 1957), 262-73 (p. 267); 'Romanticism Re-examined' in Romanticism Reconsidered, edited by Northrop Frye (London, 1963), pp. 107-33 (p. 132).

himself in irrelevant reverie unless his images and emotions are also tied to the object, and are tied to it in the sense of being fused with the matter of the object'. In perception, one modern scientist observes, 'the thing perceived is an inseparable part of the function of perceiving, which in turn includes all aspects of the total process of living.... Object and percept are part and parcel of the same thing'.¹⁴ This echoes Coleridge's belief that the poet and the object of his contemplation become one.

Furthermore, the fusion between subject and object has been used to explain the process which occurs in reading. 'It is true that they [books] consist of ideas thought out by someone else', Wolfgang Iser states, 'but in reading ... the reader becomes the subject that does the thinking. Thus there disappears the subject-object division that otherwise is a prerequisite for all knowledge and all observation, and the removal of this division puts reading in an apparently unique position as regards the possible absorption of new experiences'. Georges Poulet, discussing the same topic, claims that 'thanks to the intervention of language, the opposition between the subject and its objects has been considerably attenuated'. Literature, he believes, alleviates our sense of 'incompatibility between our consciousness and

¹⁴ Art as Experience, (New York, 1934), p. 276; W. H. Ittleson and F. P. Kilpatrick, 'Experiments in Perception', Scientific American, 185, no. 2 (August 1951), 50-55, p. 55.

its objects', since 'the extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside'.¹⁵

Subject and object, external and internal--these are among the opposites that the artist, according to Coleridge, tries to reconcile. His concept of the reconciliation of opposites is a part of his theory of organic unity and not, as Gordon McKenzie in Organic Unity in Coleridge assumes, incompatible with it.¹⁶

Henry James knew very well the interconnection between the reconciliation of opposites and organic unity. This is why 'unreconciled parts' constituted for him a major flaw in a composition, as in the case of The Ring and the Book, which he considered to be a 'great loose and uncontrolled composition'; consisting of a 'great heavy-hanging cluster of related but unreconciled parts' (NN, 307). Like Coleridge, James found unity and beauty to depend on the reconciling of opposites and saw all expressed in the novel, because it 'finds its order and its structure, its unity and its beauty in the

¹⁵The Implied Reader (London, 1974), p. 292; 'Criticism and the Experience of Interiority' in The Structuralist Controversy, edited by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (London, 1970), pp. 56-73 (pp. 58, 57).

¹⁶p. 105; René Wellek affirms: 'The dialectical reconciliation of opposites is a development of the organic principle'. See 'Coleridge's Philosophy of Criticism' in The English Romantic Poets: A Review of Research and Criticism, third revised edition (New York, 1972), pp. 209-225 (p. 225).

alternation of parts and the adjustment of differences' (NN, 280).

Embodying the reconciliation of opposites, external-internal, darkness-light, Coleridge's living plant, as we have seen, very often served as an illustration for his concept of organic unity. This is one of the reasons that organicism has long been associated with the analogy of the plant. But G. N. G. Orsini brings our attention to the original use of organicism, and thus broadens its meaning. Plato, Orsini, emphasizes, did not always identify organic unity with the organic metaphor. In the Gorgias, for instance, Plato says,

the orator, like other craftsmen (demiourgoi), has his own particular work in view and thus selects the things he requires for that work, not at random, but with the purpose of giving a certain form (eidos) to whatever he is working upon. You have only to look, for example, at the painters, (zographous), the builders, the shipwrights, or any other craftsmen, to see how each of them arranges everything according to a certain order (taxis) and forces one part to fit with another, until he combines the whole into a regular and well-ordered production.

This confirms, Orsini claims, that the 'organic metaphor is not indispensable to the principle' of organic unity.¹⁷ Indeed, Coleridge himself often rendered the whole in terms of a building or a structure, as was the case in his comparison between Greek and contemporary

¹⁷Quoted by G. N. G. Orsini, 'The Ancient Roots of a Modern Idea' in Organic Form: The Life of an Idea, pp. 7-23 (p. 20).

architecture. Whereas 'the Greeks reared a structure, which, in its parts and as a whole, filled the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion', contemporary architects, Coleridge claims, 'blending materials, produced one striking whole' (SC, II, 262).

Like Coleridge, James also at times preferred the analogy of a building to the organic metaphor, when explaining the composition of a novel. Thus, instead of intricate plants or beautiful flowers we often have just 'solid blocks of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge', or 'close-packed bricks' (AN, 296, 297). Furthermore, James seems to have anticipated John Dewey, who sees the continuity between the organic and the mechanical, between nature and architecture: 'The trait that characterizes architecture in an emphatic sense is that its media are the (relatively) raw materials of nature and of the fundamental modes of natural energy.... No other products exhibit stresses and strain, thrusts and counterthrusts, gravity, light, cohesion, on a scale at all comparable to the architectural, and it takes these forces more directly, less mediately and vicariously, than does any other art'.¹⁸

Coleridge perhaps avoided the organic metaphor because he did not consider artistic creation to be entirely spontaneous. In the case of Shakespeare's poems, for instance, we are told that 'the creative power

¹⁸Art as Experience, p. 230.

and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length in the DRAMA they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other' (BL, II, 19). Both the spontaneous and the voluntary, he believed, are necessary for the creation of a work of art, a belief which becomes especially evident in Coleridge's account of metre: 'The elements of metre', he states, 'owe their existence to a state of increased excitement', but 'these elements are formed into metre artificially, by a voluntary art, with the design and for the purpose of blending delight with emotion, so the traces of present volition should throughout the metrical language be proportionately discernible'. And he continues: 'there must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose' (BL, II, 50).

Although both George Eliot and Henry James believed that the whole existed before the parts in the artist's mind, they did not feel that a composition was entirely spontaneous. In one of her earliest essays, 'How to Avoid Disappointment' (1847), Eliot remarks: 'I love to think how the perfect whole exists in the imagination of the artist, before his pencil has marked the canvass' [sic]. And in her last essay, 'Notes on Form in Art' (1868), she expresses the same belief when she refers to structure as being 'a set of relations selected and combined in accordance with ... the preconception of a

whole which he [the constructor] has inwardly evolved'. But her remarks on poetry in the same essay clearly echo Coleridge, especially when she defines it as 'the continual intercommunication of sensibility and thought' (Essays, 17-8, 433-4, 436). Referring to Zola's Verite (1902), James claims that 'a "majestic whole", a great balanced facade, with all its orders and parts ... a singleness of mass and a unity of effect, in fine, were before him from the first' (NN, 27). But like Coleridge, he does not believe that a work springs spontaneously out of the imagination. Speaking about the central incident in The Ambassadors (1903), he says of Strether: 'the philosophy imputed to him in that beautiful outbreak, the hour there, amid such happy provision, striking for him, would have been then, on behalf of my man of imagination, to be logically ... "led up" to ... would have in short to be finely calculated. Where has he come from and why has he come, what is he doing...? To answer these questions plausibly ... was to possess myself of the entire fabric' (AN, 313).

In spite of his belief in the blending of the spontaneous and the voluntary in the composition of a work of art, Coleridge pointed to the ideal unity in Milton's and Shakespeare's works: 'I was wont boldly to affirm, that it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakespeare, (in their most important works at least,) without making the author say something else, or

something worse, than he does say' (BL, I, 15). This is an idea originating in Aristotle's Poetics. When discussing drama, Aristotle maintains that 'the parts of the scheme of incidents must be so arranged that if any part is transposed or removed the whole will be disordered and shattered; for that of which the presence or absence makes no appreciable difference is no part of the whole'.¹⁹ Modern organicists have devoted a great deal of work to an explanation of this interrelationship between the whole and the parts. Harold Osborne explains the problem best in his book Theory of Beauty and in a recent article, 'Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgement'. A work of art, he elaborates, differs fundamentally from an organism; whereas the removal of a part of an organism will often destroy the organism, the absence of a part from a work of art may not always affect its quality: 'Though minor changes in proportion or totality may ruin a piece of architecture or a symphony, the characteristic aesthetic quality of a statue may survive in an amputated torso and the quality of a symphony may be manifest in part in a movement'. Aristotle's distinction between 'parts of essence' and 'parts of accident' seems to resolve the problem, as Catherine Lord very convincingly maintains.²⁰

¹⁹Quoted by Bernard Bosanquet in A History of Aesthetic, (New York, 1953), pp. 32-3.

²⁰Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 38 (1979), 135-44 (p. 142); 'Organic Unity Reconsidered', Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 22 (1964), 283-68 (p. 265).

And the critic should determine the significance of a part by relating it to the whole. This is the point David Lodge makes in The Language of Fiction where he argues that 'only the critical intelligence can make the continual reference between part and whole which permits discrimination between degrees of significance'. In general, modern organicists do not accept the notion that each part of a work of art is 'irremovable or irreplaceable'; they seem to agree that 'the presence of such unity in a work is a sign of sheer perfection and not easily found'; or that 'extreme holism is obviously contrary to our experience of literature'.²¹

'The value of a whole poem', W. K. Wimsatt convincingly states, 'while undoubtedly reflecting something back to the parts, has to grow out of parts which are themselves valuable.... We may add that good poems may have dull parts; bad poems, bright parts'.²² Yet Coleridge would argue against Wimsatt's idea, as he felt that there should be a balance between the parts and the whole. A critic, he thought, ought to judge a poet by the questions: 'Is there more pleasure in the particular lines than is consistent with the whole? Is the sense of totality injured, or not injured, by the splendour of particular passages? For the great object of the poet must be to produce the great total effect'

²¹ (London, 1966), p. 85; Orsini, 'The Organic Concepts of Aesthetics', p. 3; Wimsatt, p. 5.

²² p. 6.

(SC, II, 79). Similarly, James asserts that the 'splendour' of the parts could 'injure' the total effect: 'whereas the beauty of a thing of this order really done as a whole is ever, certainly, that its parts are in abject dependence, and that even any great charm they may individually and capriciously put forth is infirm so far as it doesn't measurably contribute to a harmony' (AN, 136).

This harmony, James claims, depends on the kind of fusion the writer achieves between the parts and the whole. 'The thing "done", artistically, is a fusion, or it has not been done....But his [the artist's] ground once conquered, in this particular field, he knows nothing of fragments and may say in all security: "Detach one if you can. You can analyse in your way, oh yes--to relate, to report, to explain; but you can't disintegrate my synthesis; you can't resolve the elements of my whole into different responsible agents' (AN, 116). Though James felt that a good work of art illustrates an indissoluble synthesis, he did allow for analysis of the whole into its component parts. The process of criticism which Harold Osborne proposes in his Aesthetics and Criticism resolves the problem of the whole and its parts, and would perhaps appeal even to James:

It is owing to this universal pervasiveness of structure that attention can be allowed to oscillate between the whole as a whole and the various contained parts which compose the whole. And it is by this process of oscillation that aesthetic objects are studied and appreciation matures, as the whole in awareness becomes an



increasingly vivid integration of articulated parts. It must be a process of oscillation. Exclusive and continual attention to the whole can hardly result in a more vivid and opulent awareness of the whole; the normal mind is limited in its grasp and capacity. But attention to details out of relation to the whole distorts the details themselves.²³

In his preface to The Tragic Muse, Henry James speaks of the situation in which he has left Miriam Rooth at the end of the novel. Though he admits, 'there would be still more to be said' about her relationship with either Nick Dormer or Peter Sherringham, he prefers to have the ending 'left over' to the reader. As in the case of The Portrait of a Lady, The Tragic Muse is open-ended. George Eliot was also implicitly referring to such incompleteness in Adam Bede, when she wrote to John Blackwood in 1858, 'I'm very sorry to part with her [Mrs Poyser] and some of my other characters--there seems to be so much more to be done with them' (GEL, II, 512). Both writers, then, were well aware of the promise of the incomplete, another aspect of organicism, and one which Coleridge articulates in his comparison between Greek and Shakespearean drama. Whereas in Sophocles there is a 'completeness, a satisfying, an excellence, on which the mind can rest', in Shakespeare 'we see a blended multitude of materials, great and little, magnificent and mean, mingled, if we may say, with a dissatisfying, or falling short of perfection, yet so promising of our

²³ (London, 1955), pp. 258-59.

progression, that we would not exchange it for that repose of the mind which dwells on the forms of symmetry in acquiescent admiration of grace' (SC, II, 262-63). The paradox of the perfection of the incomplete is accepted, and indeed cultivated, by modern organicism; it is the meaning of the one and the many 'in consisting both at the same time of oneness and manyness, sameness and difference, unity and disunity'.²⁴

But organic unity, 'if a necessary condition for the composition of work of art, is not sufficient for it'. There are other factors involved in the composition of a work of art, and these, G. N. G. Orsini maintains, are 'imagination, feeling and taste'. Orsini's notion is congruous with Coleridge's idea of organic unity. Imagination, feeling, and taste are at times inextricably fused with Coleridge's concept of unity. He might very well agree with Orsini that 'without them, we may obtain a well-constructed work of the intellect or of the practical reason but not a work of art'.²⁵

Coleridge defined taste in terms similar to those he applied to the imagination. For him, taste was the faculty 'which connects the active with the passive powers of our nature, the intellect with the senses; and its appointed function is to elevate the images of the latter, while it realizes the ideas of the former' (BL,

²⁴ Archie Balm, 'The Aesthetics of Organicism', Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 25, (1968), 449-59 (p. 452).

²⁵ 'The Ancient Roots of a Modern Idea', p. 21.

II, 227). In order to see how images and ideas are combined or fused we ought to look at the qualities that Coleridge attributes to the imagination. One of these qualities is the power of 'modifying one image or feeling by the precedent or following one' (SC, I, 216).

Elsewhere, Coleridge connects images with feeling more explicitly, as in saying, for instance, that one of the qualities of Shakespeare's imagination is that 'it acts by impressing the stamp of humanity, of human feeling, over inanimate objects', and he gives the following image as an illustration: 'the pines shorn by the sea wind and seen in twilight' (SC, I, 213). Images themselves, no matter how beautiful, are not effective unless, Coleridge believes, they 'are modified by a predominant passion'.

In one of his lectures on Shakespeare, Coleridge cites different images from Venus and Adonis in order to illustrate that 'there was accuracy of description blended with the fervour of the poet's mind, thereby communicating pleasure to the reader' (SC, II, 95).

Unless images are triggered by a 'genuine feeling', George Eliot also believed, they cannot be effective. In fact she felt that imagery was 'vicious' when it resulted from 'insincerity' (Essays, 367). Furthermore, she connected feeling with image, by seeing the one as the expression of the other. Heine, she tells us in one of her articles in 1856, 'excels ... in the more imaginative expression of feeling: he represents it by a brief image, like a finely-cut cameo' (Essays, 249).

Henry James voiced the same opinion in his essay 'The New

Novel' (1914) when referring to Edith Wharton, who, he thought 'even encourages her expression to flower into some sharp image or figure of her thought when that will make the thought more finely touch us' (NN, 281). Like Coleridge, James believes that an image can be an effective vehicle to express the author's feeling and to affect the reader with it.

Only when images embody feeling, Coleridge maintains, they become 'proofs of original genius'; and by expressing a predominant feeling within a composition, they simultaneously possess a unifying quality. Images then are the expressions which characterize a superior mind, when they 'are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion, or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit' (BL, II, 16). Indeed, the miraculous power of Shakespeare's imagination, Coleridge demonstrates, is at once revealed when 'one image or feeling is made to modify many others and by a sort of fusion to force many into one', as in Lear, 'where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven' (SC, I, 212-13). In fact Lear's anguish is extended and identified with the image of the storm and the image is so powerful that it is equated to the play. 'What is Lear?' Coleridge elsewhere asks, and he answers: 'It is storm and tempest--the thunder at first grumbling

in the far horizon, then gathering around us, and at length bursting in fury over our heads,--succeeded by a breaking of the clouds for a while, a last flash of lightning, the closing in of night, and the single hope of darkness'.²⁶ Since Coleridge saw each major Shakespearean character at the centre of each play, it is not surprising that from this centre he saw emanating the feelings and images controlling the rest of the characters or the rest of the play. Similarly, Henry James saw the most important character in the centre of his novel, and as in the case of Fleda Vetch described her position in organic terms--'she planted herself centrally' (AN, 127).

But in what ways are the polarities between external-internal, subject-object (through which the character is often portrayed) reconciled? Again we have to turn to the imagination for an answer because it is the faculty which 'reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of ... the idea, with the image' (BL, II, 12). In Coleridge's 'Treatise of Method' (1817), we can see how the internal/subject is identified with the idea, and the external/object with the image. In this long essay we are often reminded of the plant, especially when we are told: 'events and images, the lively and spirit-stirring machinery of the external world, are like light, and air, and moisture, to the seed of the Mind, which

²⁶ Miscellaneous Criticism, edited by Thomas Middleton Raysor (London, 1936), p. 45.

would else rot and perish. In all processes of mental evolution the objects of the senses must stimulate the Mind; and the Mind must in turn assimilate and digest the food which it thus receives from without'. As in the case of the imagination, the Fine Arts, Coleridge continues, also reconcile the image with the idea, for the Fine Arts 'belong to the outward world, for they all operate by the image of sight and sound, and other sensible impressions ... but as certainly he [an artist] must always be a poor and unsuccessful cultivator of the Arts if he is not impelled first by a mighty, inward power, a feeling ... nor can he make great advances in his Art, if ... the obscure impulse does not gradually become a bright, and clear, living Idea!'²⁷

George Eliot expressed the interconnection between image and idea in her comments on Graigerook Castle, a collection of poems; she had read these poems, she claims, 'with growing dissatisfaction, from a growing perception that the writer's profuse imagery is an end instead of a means. It does not serve to bring more vividly before us an object, an idea or an emotion, but rather thrusts itself forward as a substitute or a screen'.²⁸ Thus she reminds us of Coleridge's comments that images 'however beautiful though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not themselves characterize the poet', unless they are

²⁷Treatise on Method, edited by Alice D. Snyder (London, 1934), pp. 7, 62-63.

²⁸Westminster Review, 67, p. 310.

unified by feeling. In an essay on Guy de Maupassant (1888), Henry James also recognized the linking of the image with the idea and saw their fusion as the basis for a successful story: 'Every good story is of course both a picture and an idea, and the more they are interfused the better the problem is solved' (PP, 69). And in his famous 'Art of Fiction' image becomes idea in the story of an English novelist who had once successfully described the life of young French Protestants. Her description, James tells us, grew from a single glimpse she once had as she was passing by an open door of a house where some young Protestants lived: 'the glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience. She had got her direct personal impression, and she turned out her type. She knew what youth was, and what Protestantism; she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French, so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced reality' (PP, 289).

Coleridge too saw images as essential to poetic representation, but stated that 'to judge with fairness of an author's works we must observe firstly what is essential, and secondly what arises from circumstances'. In this respect he anticipated the modern organicists who, as we have seen, distinguish between 'parts of essence' and 'parts of accident'. And he agreed with Milton that poetry should be 'simple; sensuous; and impassionate;--simple, that it may appeal to the elements and the primary laws of our nature; sensuous, since it is

only by sensuous images that we elicit truth as at a flash; impassionate, since images must be vivid, in order to move our passions and awaken our affections' (SC, II, 260). Images, no doubt, dominate Coleridge's definitions of poetry and drama.

So far, then, images have been connected with the most important concepts of organic unity--they can express beauty, since 'only objects of the eye and the ear can have parts'; they embody feeling and truth; through them a character is developed and the reconciliation of opposites is possible; and an image is very often the germ which in turn is the story. Indeed images can be the parts of an organic whole, as Orsini declares: 'the elementary particles of which a work is composed could be the images which are to be found in it, each ... endowed with its own particular power of expression'.²⁹ Furthermore, by means of images a novelist has the enchanting 'power of so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words--to make him see everything--and this without exciting any painful or laborious attention' (SC, I, 214).

Seeing in literature involves our imagination, especially its image-making faculty. Perception and memory, though, are also activated, and stimulated during reading. And the creative process itself is interwoven with the perception-memory-imagination cycle. But before

²⁹'The Ancient Roots of a Modern Idea', p. 10.

we can examine how the reader can participate in the creative process, we need to look more closely at the life-cycle of images, the subject of the next chapter.

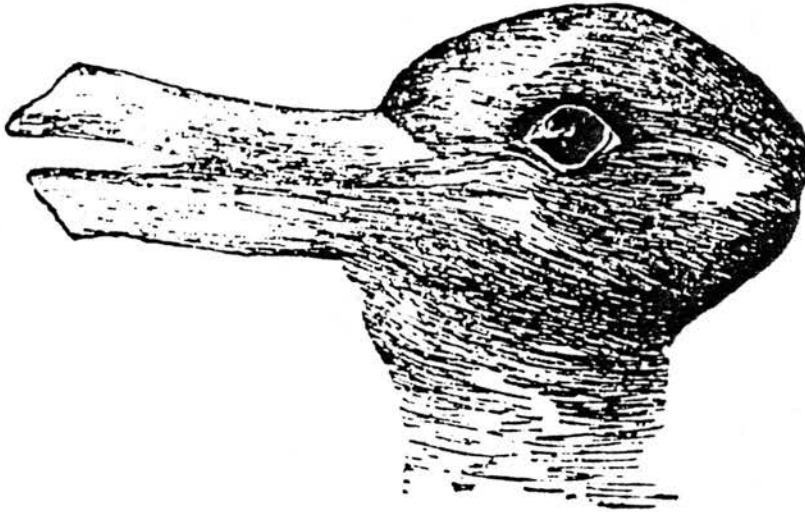
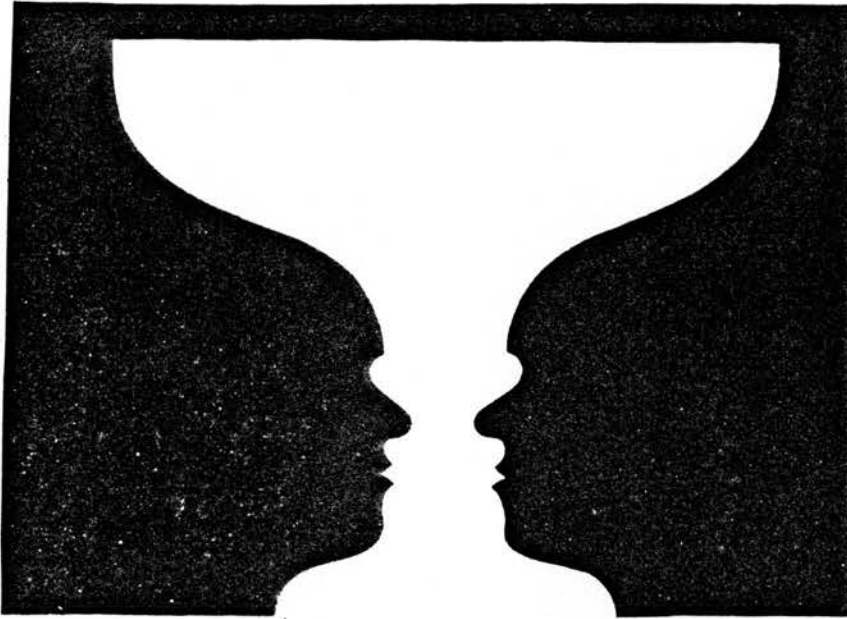
CHAPTER 2

THE DISTANT AND THE IMPERCEPTIBLE

Reminiscing about his first reading of Madame Bovary, Henry James beautifully sketches the interplay between the internal and the external, and, as he goes on, the dialectic is gradually replaced by a delicate fusion of memory, perception, and imagination : 'taking it in with so surprised an interest ... that the sunny little salon, the autumn day, the window ajar and the cheerful outside clatter of the Rue Montaigne are all now for me more or less in the story and the story more or less in them' (NN, 61). Undoubtedly, perception, memory, and imagination become inextricably fused in our reading of a novel, and it is often difficult to distinguish sharply when, where, or how, one process ends and the other begins.

Starting with perception and imagination in our daily lives, we can move on to understand better the role of the imagination in our encounters with the literary world. The figure-ground phenomenon, an instance drawn from the visual arts, may serve as an apt illustration of

the important role imagination plays in our comprehension even of perceptual events.



Ambiguous figures like these often serve as illustrations in studies of perception, demonstrating how our recognition of parts can lead us to an identification of the whole. In the case of Rubin's reversible goblet, for instance, once we identify a curve as a nose, the rest of the lines support our assumption and we see two

profiles facing one another, while the rest recedes to the background. The same happens in the rabbit-duck figure in which the parts 'lock-in' to support one whole at a time. It is obvious that in such cases, as Fred Attneave points out, 'the identification of wholes and of parts will likewise be reciprocally supportive, contributing further to the locking-in process'. Such figures also illustrate the relationship between perception and memory; that is, we recognise the familiar figures of the duck or the rabbit, and we tend to agree with Attneave's claims that in ambiguous figures 'the visual inputs can be matched to some acquired or learned schemata of classes of objects' and that 'one reason ambiguity exists is that a single input can be matched to different schemata'.¹

Yet Mary Warnock's approach to ambiguous figures is even more appealing, and no doubt more expansive. In the concluding chapter of her study on imagination, she borrows the duck-rabbit figure from Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations and shows how we can complete the duck or the rabbit in the mind's eye by adding, for instance, to the head the rest of the body which is missing from the picture itself. She also relates this example to 'the more complex case of seeing a painting as a portrait, that is seeing the original in the painting and perhaps conjuring up other aspects of

¹ 'Multistability in Perception' in Recent Progress in Perception: Readings from the Scientific American, edited by Richard Held and Whitman Richards (San Francisco, 1976), pp. 142-51 (p. 145).

him, to complete the portrait-painter's image, as the likeness dawns'. In such a case, she believes, we cannot sharply distinguish between perceptions which call for elucidation and those which do not; our understanding of them, she feels, very often involves our imagination, simply because imagination 'is our means of interpreting the world, and it is also our means of forming images in the mind'. Then she goes on to amplify this point:

The images themselves are not separate from our interpretations of the world; they are our way of thinking of the objects in the world. We see the forms in our mind's eye and we see these very forms in the world. We could not do one of these things if we could not do the other. The two abilities are joined in our ability to understand that the forms have a certain meaning, that they are always significant² of other things beyond themselves.

Warnock's enthusiasm for the role of the imagination in our lives is not, however, shared by other twentieth-century philosophers, who approach imagination with distrust. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, speaks of the "essential poverty" of the imagination; Merleau-Ponty describes the 'pseudo-presence of the imagination'; and Wittgenstein claims that 'images tell us nothing, either right or wrong, about the external world'.³ Even Bachelard, whose books are primarily rhapsodies of the

²Imagination (London, 1976), p. 194.

³The Psychology of Imagination, translated by B. Frechtman (London, 1972), p. 170; Zettel, edited and translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1967), p. 109e; Phenomenology of Perception, translated by Colin Smith (London, 1962), p. 184.

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imagination, admits, at the beginning of his book The Poetics of Reverie, that imagery is a 'fluid and unstable' subject (p. 2).

A suspicious attitude towards the imagination has never been unusual in any century. Even George Eliot, before her literary career (1840), saw imagination as 'an enemy that must be cast down ere I can enjoy peace or exhibit uniformity of character. I know not which of its caprices I have most to dread--that which incites it to spread sackcloth "above, below, around," or that which makes it "cheat my eye with blear illusion, and beget strange dreams" of excellence and beauty in beings and things of only "working day" price' (GEL, I, 65-66). But even in these accusations, which George Eliot voiced as a young woman, we can detect her awareness of the close relationship between imagination and perception, a relationship which, as we shall see, she constantly explored in her novels. She would very probably have agreed, even then, with Henry James's narrator in 'The Special Type' (1900), who comments that 'imagination and observation' are 'twin demons' that will not allow one to detach himself from life or from others' problems.⁴

As we look more closely into George Eliot's and Henry James's ideas on imagination, we become increasingly aware of the profound effect which Coleridge's organic theory of the imagination has had on them. No doubt, we can assert that the roots of Eliot's

⁴ Complete Tales of Henry James, edited by Leon Edel, 12 vols (London, 1961-64), XI, 179.

and James's theories of the imagination are within the Romantic soil. They both seem to have taken over where Coleridge left off and, quite frequently, their concepts seem to complete what Coleridge left incomplete. But what is even more striking is the fact that Eliot's and James's insights into imagination, perception, and memory, reach over to the twentieth century. We could say, then, that their concepts, to borrow James's metaphor, are 'hinged doors opening straight upon life' (AN, 46); that is, their criticism and their fiction embody ideas which have played an important role in philosophical, psychological, and scientific studies of the imagination and its affiliate faculties, perception and memory. Both Eliot and James effectively break the insularity associated with literary figures--indeed, their fictional works 'open straight to life'.

Trying here to recapitulate an organic theory of the imagination, I have started with Coleridge's concepts and have moved on to Eliot's and James's Coleridgean echoes. Simultaneously, I try to show how lucidly Eliot and James have anticipated modern figures. It is almost impossible to speak of imagination without taking into consideration perception as well as memory. The more we try to distinguish imagination from perception and memory the clearer and sharper its meaning becomes. Although my emphasis here is on an organic theory of the imagination, I have also taken into account the affinities which it shares with memory and perception. Finally, I have tried to show how all three faculties are interrelated in a

creative act and in a creative reading of a novel.

Coleridge's, Eliot's, and James's insights seem but parts of a coherent whole--valuable for our study not only of novels by these particular writers but of any good novel.

We have already seen that Coleridge is the primary spokesman for an organic theory of the imagination. His approach to the imagination was not entirely metaphysical. Like other modern philosophers, he tried to explain its role in man's creative thinking. His comparison of the human mind to a water-insect beautifully illustrates the reconciling role of the imagination between activity and receptivity, both essential to the composition of poetry or any other creative act:

Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and will have noticed, how the little animal wins its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking. There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION) (BL, I, 85-86).

Coleridge then, did not regard imagination as purely an originating force but rather as the bridge between the

mind and nature. And the fusion of the subject and the object could become possible both through concentration and receptivity. According to Coleridge, the human mind is divided into three parts: 'the passive sense, or what the school-men call the merely receptive quality of the mind; the voluntary; and the spontaneous, which holds the middle place between both' (BL, I, 66).

Coleridge's receptive state of mind seems to be a state of relaxed attention, effusively articulated by Bachelard in his book The Poetics of Reverie. Early in this book, without referring to Coleridge specifically, Bachelard distinguishes between reverie and poetic reverie. Whereas reverie is usually identified with lack of attention and is 'often without memory', poetic reverie is a time when 'all the senses awaken and fall in harmony.... Poetic reverie listens to this polyphony of the senses, and the poetic consciousness must record it' (pp. 5-6). In order to emphasize the consciousness of the one who experiences a reverie, Bachelard also contrasts him with the dreamer. While we are not conscious of our dreams, we are conscious enough of our reveries to say, 'It is I who dream the reverie, it is I who am content to dream my reverie, happy with this leisure in which I no longer have the task of thinking' (p. 22). Like Bachelard, Coleridge was intensely aware of the creative potential in man's ability to be receptive, and remarked (1804): 'a time will come when passiveness will attain the dignity of worthy activity, when men shall be as proud within themselves of having

remained in a state of deep tranquil emotion, whether in reading or in hearing or in looking, as they are now in having figured away for an hour'. For Coleridge, men of genius 'remain with hearts broad awake, and the understanding asleep in all but its retentiveness and receptivity'.⁵

'Passiveness' did attain 'the dignity of worthy activity' in George Eliot's and Henry James's works. George Eliot seems to have been articulating Coleridge's wish when she said, in Daniel Deronda that, 'receptiveness is a rare and massive power like fortitude' (p. 553). Henry James expressed the same belief on numerous occasions; in a letter to Sergeant Perry in 1860, he wrote: 'there are however no such fields and meadows and groves as there are near Lily Pond, places where you can halt and lie out on the flat of your back and loll and loaf and reverise' (HJL, Edel, I, 20). Recognizing imagination as both active and passive, James called it in his preface to 'In the Cage' 'that rash, that idle faculty' (AN, 158). A receptive quality of mind as the primary condition for creativity is indeed one of the primary concerns in Roderick Hudson. During their first visit to Rome, Rowland tells Roderick that one should live with an open mind, 'open doors', for as long as possible before one gets too old and finds oneself confronted with 'a solid blank wall' against which one is 'thumping ... in vain.... "Open

⁵Anima Poetae, p. 66.

doors"? Roderick sounded, "Yes, let us close no doors that open upon Rome ... for the mind, must be the most breathable air in the world.... But though my doors may stand open to-day ... I shall see no visitors; I want to pause and breathe; I want to give the desired vision a chance to descend"' (p. 88).

Modern philosophers often relate receptivity or conscious passivity to the unconscious. In his long, thorough study of the imagination Harold Rugg, for example, shows that he believes imagination to be creative in the 'conscious, nonconscious continuum', what he calls the 'transliminal state'.⁶ Rugg's 'transliminal state' seems to be also very close to Coleridge's receptivity or Bachelard's reverie; like Coleridge, he considers imagination as the reconciler between active and passive faculties, which in his terms become the conscious and nonconscious states.

The vitality and dynamism of the imagination are glowing in Coleridge's often quoted statement in his Biographia Literaria. Since one cannot treat Coleridge's theory of imagination without taking his famous definition into consideration, I propose to approach it from others' viewpoints, in order to show its effect on nineteenth and twentieth-century studies of the imagination. 'The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary', Coleridge very definitely states

⁶Imagination, first edition (London, 1963), p. 97.

at the end of Chapter XIII in Biographia. And he continues:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and 'dead' (BL, I, 202).

James Baker's interpretation of Coleridge's definition places emphasis on the creative quality of the imagination. In his study The Sacred River, Baker declares that imagination is not 'merely spontaneous, unconscious, and passive', but 'active in the highest degree'. A poet's creative act, Baker continues, 'is similar to the creative act by which God ordered the world out of chaos'. But he modifies this statement by adding, 'if the poet's creative act is not a creation ex nihilo, it is a process of organic becoming through which old materials are transformed into something absolutely new and also, very likely, strange'.⁷ But better than Baker or, it seems, any other of Coleridge's critics, Ruskin in his Modern Painters, vividly and simply

⁷Coleridge's Theory of the Imagination (Louisiana State U. P., 1957), pp. 3-4.

explains the creative function of the imagination in organic terms: 'Look back to the greatest of all creation, that of the world. Suppose the trees had been ever so well or so ingeniously put together, stem and leaf, yet if they had not been able to grow, would they have been well created? Or suppose the fish had been cut and stitched finely out of skin and whalebone; yet, cast upon the waters, had not been able to swim?' Without mentioning Coleridge, he echoes him in attributing to the imagination a godlike quality: 'It will, perhaps, appear to you, after a little farther thought, that to create anything in reality is to put life into it. A poet, or creator, is therefore a person who puts things together, not as a watchmaker steel, or a shoemaker leather, but who puts life into them'.⁸

In Ruskin's statements we can see very clearly the essence of an organic theory of the imagination. The poet or the artist, like God, breathes life into his creation and the creation itself becomes a living being. With this in mind, we can understand why Coleridge equates (does not just compare) imagination with growth: 'the rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production' (BL, II, 65). We have already seen how Coleridge likened the poet's mind to a plant, assimilating diverse materials into an integral whole. Ruskin, again, shows us the link between organic

⁸The Works of John Ruskin, edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London, 1903-12), VII, 215. Further references to Modern Painters are given after quotations in the text.

unity and the imagination more directly and convincingly than Coleridge:

The imagination will banish all that is extraneous; it will seize out of the many threads of different feeling which nature has suffered to become entangled, one only; and where that seems thin and likely to break, it will spin it stouter, and in doing this, it never knots, but weaves in the new thread; so that all its work looks as pure and true as nature itself.... so that herein we find another test of the imaginative work, that it looks always as if it had been gathered straight from nature, whereas the unimaginative shows its joints and knots, and is visibly composition (MP, II, 246-47).

His statements in this case also echo Coleridge's attempts to distinguish between the mechanical and the organic, which in Ruskin's terminology become 'unimaginative' and 'imaginative' or 'unnatural' and 'natural' (MP, II, 247).

In ^{the} twentieth century a work of art often is said to mirror Nature's qualities. For Bachelard, an exuberant spokesman for the imagination, Coleridge's plant seems to have become a tree. In fact, imagination itself is a tree: 'It has the integrative virtues of a tree. It is root and boughs. It lives between earth and sky. Imagination lives in the earth and in the wind. The imagined tree is imperceptibly the cosmological tree, the tree which summarizes a universe, which makes a universe'.⁹ Like Coleridge, then, Bachelard sees the imagination as both creative--since it 'makes a

⁹La Terre et les rêveries du repos (Paris, 1948), p. 300.

universe'--and synthetic--since it 'summarizes a universe'. The plant or the tree, which live 'in the earth and in the wind' have other appealing implications. I would like to concentrate here on the part that lives in the earth, the root.

The analogy of the tree or the plant is in itself interesting because it almost displays the architectonics of the imagination. We can see that it has both height and depth. James illustrates these dimensions in his preface to The American, as we have seen, when he says, referring to the germ of the novel: 'Precisely because it had so much to give, I think, must I have dropped it for the time into the deep well of unconscious cerebration; not without the hope, doubtless, that it might eventually emerge from the reservoir, as one had already known the buried treasure to come to light, with a firm iridescent surface and a notable increase of weight' (AN, 23).

It was precisely with the depth of the imagination that Ruskin was dealing when he spoke of its penetrating quality. The metaphysician's definition of the imagination is inadequate, Ruskin believed, 'when we look at the imagination neither as regarding, nor combining, but as penetrating (MP, II, 227). In fact, he considered this quality to be one of the most significant characteristics of the imagination and called it 'intuitive and penetrative perception' (MP, II, 228). Later, in the same volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin explains more clearly the penetrative quality of the imagination, in a paragraph with the heading, 'The

Imagination seizes always by the innermost point'. Here he remarks that, the imagination 'never stops at crusts or ashes, or outward images of any kind; it ploughs them all aside, and plunges into the very central fiery heart.... its function and gift are the getting at the root, its nature and dignity depend on its holding things always by the heart' (MP, II, 250-51). Whereas the imagination delves into the substance, below the surface, fancy sees only the outside. 'The virtue of the Imagination', Ruskin points out, 'is its reaching, by intuition and intensity of gaze ...a more essential truth than is seen at the surface of things' (MP, II, 284).

In his criticism of other writers, James often praised those who dealt with depth, and criticized those who concentrated on the surface. Describing Hawthorne's imagination, he calls it not only 'delicate' but also 'penetrating'--the very term Ruskin uses. Hawthorne's imagination, we are told, delved into human nature 'always engaged in a game of hide-and-seek in the region in which it seemed to him that the game could be best played--among the shadows and substructions, the dark-based pillars and supports of our moral nature'.¹⁰ By comparison with Hawthorne, James's view of Flaubert was rather different. Flaubert was an 'apostle of surface' and his novels, in James's view, often revealed his 'superiority ... as a painter of aspects and sensations, and his lapses and limitations, his general

¹⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1879), p. 28.

insignificance, as a painter of ideas and moral states'.¹¹

When describing the circumstances of the composition of his own works, James is intensely aware of penetrating the surface, of exploring the depth; his experiences in London before writing Princess Casamassima illustrate his passion for what is not accessible to perception: 'to haunt the great city and by this habit to penetrate it, imaginatively, in as many places as possible--that was to be informed, that was to pull wires, that was to open doors, that positively was to groan at times under the weight of one's accumulations (AN, 77). Quite clearly, his own characters are often described exploring the world within, and in his late novels they are hardly conscious of the external world. Hyacinth's imagination, for instance, we are told, 'plunged again and again into the flood that whirled past it and round it, in the hope of being carried into some brighter, happier vision' (140-41). As Dencombe, the main character in 'The Middle Years' (1895), is reading his own book, he feels himself being 'drawn down, as by a siren's hand, to where, in the dim underworld of fiction, the great glazed tank of art, strange silent subjects float' (p. 81).

George Eliot too had the tendency to look inward, to explore depth. Even Trollope's objection to her analytic imagination reveals this: 'her imagination is no doubt strong, but it acts in analysing rather than in creating.

¹¹Essays in London and Elsewhere (New York, 1893), pp. 159, 158.

Everything that comes before her is pulled to pieces so that the inside of it shall be seen, and be seen if possible by her readers as clearly as by herself'.¹²

Depth, for George Eliot, is the most important quality. A 'boldly imaginative poet', in her view is one who can be 'as sincere as the most realistic: he is true to his own sensibilities or inward vision, and in his wildest flights he never breaks loose from his criterion--the truth of his own mental state' (Essays, 367). Lydgate in Middlemarch also rejects the type of imagination which flies 'in distant orbs' in favor of the 'imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy, capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space'. For Lydgate, cheap inventions are the product of ignorance; he yearns to dedicate himself to 'arduous invention which is the very eye of research... he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy' (p. 194).

Imagination's penetrative, inward quality is even more important when it is transformed into the ability to project oneself into something or someone, to become that something or someone. We have already seen how Coleridge extolled Shakespeare for his 'Protean', transforming, imagination and admired him because he 'darts himself

¹²An Autobiography (London, 1950), p. 245.

forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood' (BL, II, 20, my italics). No doubt Henry James was acutely conscious of 'the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature; the act of personal possesssion of one being by another at its completest' (AN, 37, my italics). Strether, to mention one among many, represents such an identification; his imagination had 'helped him to discriminate', and this quality, in turn, James happily says, was indeed 'the element that was for so much of the pleasure of my cutting thick ... into his intellectual, into his moral substance' (AN, 316, my italics).

Getting out of one's own self and projecting the self into the other is another quality of the penetrative imagination. 'It is easy to cloathe imaginary Beings with our Thoughts and Feelings', Coleridge wrote in 1802, 'but to send ourselves out of ourselves, to think ourselves in to the Thoughts and Feelings of beings in circumstances wholly and strangely different from our own ... and who has achieved it? Perhaps only Shakespeare' (CCL, II, 810). George Eliot expressed the same idea in a letter to Henrietta Stowe in 1876: 'Moreover, not only towards the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us'. One of her goals as a novelist has been, she continues, 'to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of

human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs' (GEL, VI, 301). This kind of penetrative or sympathetic imagination Shelley named 'the great instrument of moral good', because, he believed, 'a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own'.¹³

Similarly, James often defines imagination explicitly in his stories as the projection of the self into the other. Maggie, for instance, in The Golden Bowl (1904), tells her father during one of their intimate conversations at the end of the novel, '"one must always, whether or no, have some imagination of the states of others--of what they may feel deprived of. However"', Maggie adds, '"Kitty and Dotty couldn't imagine we were deprived of anything. And now, and now--!" But she stopped as for indulgence to their wonder and envy' (II, 258). It follows then that lack of imagination is for James the inability to experience other people's feelings. Because Owen, in The Spoils of Poynton (1897) has no imagination, he cannot understand why his mother hates Mona: 'but this [his mother's hatred] belonged to an order of mysteries that never troubled him: there were lots of things, especially in people's minds, that a

¹³'A Defence of Poetry' in The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols (London, 1965), VII, 118.

fellow didn't understand. Poor Owen went through life with a frank dread of people's minds' (p. 42).

What emerges from George Eliot's works is precisely the same belief, that imagination is the ability to experience what others feel. Daniel Deronda seems to be the embodiment of the goal she expresses in her letter to Henrietta Stowe, because 'his conscience included sensibilities beyond the common, enlarged by his early habit of thinking himself imaginatively into the experience of others' (p. 570). But the movement 'out of the self' and 'into the thoughts and feelings' of others affects us even more powerfully when it is expressed in poignant irony by Maggie's imagination at the climax of The Mill on the Floss (1860). Numb to any other thought but to her intense desire to stay with Stephen, Maggie suddenly is electrified by a brief glimpse of the effect of her action: '"Oh, I can't do it", she said in a voice almost of agony-- "Stephen--don't ask me--don't urge me.--I can't argue any longer.--I don't know what is wise--but my heart will not let me do it. I see--I feel their trouble now; it is as if it were branded on my mind"' (p. 605). Here Maggie's painful concern for others illustrates Ruskin's concept of 'the reciprocal action between between the intensity of moral feeling and the power of imagination'. For Ruskin 'those who have keenest sympathy are those who look closest and pierce deepest, and hold securest; and ... those who have so pierced and seen the melancholy deeps of things are

filled with the most intense passion and gentleness of sympathy' (MP, II, 257).

The dimension of depth then, as we have seen, is related to the organic, the 'inner nature', 'the adventures of the soul, the projection of the self into the other. By means of the imagination, one is able to reach, feel, see, and understand the invisible, the imperceptible. This was one of the reasons why Coleridge praised religion and poetry; he believed that both of these types of expression 'throw the object of deepest interest to a distance from us, and thereby not only aid our imagination, but in a most important manner subserve the interest of our virtues; for that man is indeed slave, who is a slave to his own senses, and whose mind and imagination cannot carry him beyond the distance which his hand can touch, or even his eye can reach' (SC, II, 147). And one of the aims of education, Coleridge thought, should be to rescue the child from the 'despotism of the eye' (BL, I, 74). Indeed the distant and the imperceptible were among George Eliot's concerns. In her essay on Young, for instance, she urges us to sympathize with others not because, as Young argues, we will go to heaven, but simply because, 'through my union and fellowship with the men and women I have seen, I feel a like, though a fainter, sympathy with those I have not seen; and I am able so to live in imagination with the generations to come, that their good is not alien to me, and is a stimulus to me to labour for ends which may not benefit myself, but will benefit them' (Essays, 374).

In this context, we can understand why the narrator in 'Amos Barton' (1857) informs us that for Mr. Barton to leave the parish, to part from Milly's grave, would be like parting with Milly a second time, 'for Amos was one who clung to all the material links between his mind and the past. His imagination was not vivid, and required the stimulus of actual perception' (pp. 112-13). Yet this comment does not imply that George Eliot believed that imagination should not be based on perception. In fact, she states the opposite in 'False Testimonials', a chapter in her last work, Theophrastus Such. Contrary to common belief, she remarks, imagination is not 'a very usual lack of discriminating perception ... unchecked by the troublesome need of veracity'. A vivid imagination, she continues, 'is always based on a keen vision, a keen consciousness of what is, and carries the store of definite knowledge as material for the construction of its inward visions' (p. 195). 'Definite knowledge' is the basis of the imagination, as described by George Henry Lewes in his study, Problems of Life and Mind (1873), where he speaks of 'illusory hypotheses' in the same deprecatory manner in which Lydgate refers to cheap inventions: 'To imagine a natural process', means for Lewes, 'to see the Agents or Agencies which are really operative, or which, if present, would act so as to produce the result observed. But this mental picture of the unseen process', he continues, 'is given only to the highest minds equipped with exact knowledge.... But precision is the one quality which impatient minds least

appreciate; and therefore Illusory Hypotheses spring up like mushrooms in half-cultivated minds and are readily accepted by the uncultivated'.¹⁴

And imagination based upon fact, not illusion, is what the narrator in Daniel Deronda has in mind when she states that poetic power lies 'in the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact instead of floating among cloud pictures' (p. 431). Such a statement seems to include both the dimensions of the imagination, both its height--'exalts'--and its depth--'pierces'. It also seems to capture the meaning of Coleridge's famous assertion that the secondary imagination 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify'. George Eliot's remark, furthermore, resembles closely Ruskin's idea of the duty of the artist, which he considers to be 'not only to address and awaken, but to guide the imagination; and there is no safe guidance but that of simple concurrence with fact' (MP, III, 179).

Both George Eliot and Ruskin then share Coleridge's conviction that the creative imagination is often based on perception. Most of Coleridge's critics, including I. A. Richards, Harold Rugg, and Basil Willey, agree with Shawcross that 'the primary imagination is the organ of common perception, the faculty by which we have experience of an actual world of phenomena' (BL, I, 272).

¹⁴third edition, 2 vols (London, 1874), I, 337.

But what is the material which the secondary imagination must 'dissolve, diffuse, and dissipate'? Basil Willey provides us with a satisfying answer: it is the '"inanimate cold world" of the Primary Imagination; all that is allowed to the daily prosaic consciousness of average humanity, and to poets themselves when power deserts them'.¹⁵

In The Road to Xanadu, his well-known, fascinating study of Coleridge's sources for his poems, John Livingston Lowes repeatedly shows the perceptual origins of Coleridge's poems. The assumption behind his study was, Lowes claims, that 'the imagination never operates in a vacuum. Its stuff is always fact of some order, somehow experienced; its product is that fact transmuted'. Lowes's assertion that 'one of the most momentous functions of the imagination' is 'its sublimation of brute fact', sounds much like George Eliot's claim that the imagination 'exalts the solid fact'. And when he goes on to say that 'without a knowledge of the crass materials, the profoundly significant process is unintelligible', he reminds us of Lewes's similar statements in his distinction between true and illusory hypotheses.¹⁶

Our interpretation of Coleridge's definition of the primary and secondary imagination is somewhat shaken,

¹⁵Coleridge on Imagination, p. 58; Imagination, p. 197; Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy (London, 1947), pp. 15, 5.

¹⁶(New York, 1927), pp. 426-27, 48.

however, when we come across Coleridge's evaluation of his own theory, made in June 28, 1834, one month before his death: 'The metaphysical disquisition at the end of the first volume of Biographia Literaria is unformed and immature; it contains the fragments of the truth, but it is not fully thought out. It is wonderful to myself to think how infinitely more profound my views now are and yet how much clearer they are withal. The circle is completing; the idea is coming round to, and to be, the common sense' (CCW, VI, 520). Yet these 'fragments of truth' have affected most theories of the imagination in both nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most philosophers and artists seem to accept the continuity between perception and imagination. William James, for instance, in his definition of imagination in his Psychology (1890), states: 'sensations, once experienced, modify the nervous organisms, so that copies of them arise again in the mind after the original outward stimulus is gone. No mental copy, however, can arise in the mind, of any kind of sensation which has never been directly excited from without'. Imagination, he believes, is exactly that 'faculty of reproducing copies of originals once felt'. And he proceeds to distinguish between the 'reproductive' imagination, which produces 'literal' copies, and the 'productive', which brings together elements from 'different originals' and recombines them in such a way as to 'make new wholes'.¹⁷

¹⁷ (New York, 1930), p. 302.

Twentieth-century psychologists as well as art critics hold a similar view. Peter McKellar, for instance, claims that Freud's analysis of dreams illustrates convincingly that fantasies, no matter how original they may seem, always originate in actual experience. The implication of this, McKellar believes, is that 'not merely man's dreams, but his most unrestrained imaginings, his original inventions and ideas, and those thought products we call works of art and science, all derive from recent and /or remote perceptions'. Extensive studies on imagination in art are couched in almost similar terms. Rudolph Arnheim in Art and Visual Perception and E. H. Gombrich in Art and Illusion propose that indeed imagination is based on perception and that something is not unoriginal if it has perceptual origins. In this respect especially, they seem to share McKellar's view that 'originality can arise from the connection, rearrangement, and fusion of perceptions'.¹⁸

Ruskin was also referring to the cumulative nature of the imagination when he described it as the 'great faculty' which 'the mind exercises in a certain mode of regarding or combining the ideas it has received from external nature' (MP, II, 36). Quite clearly imagination for Henry James does have a perceptual basis; in his preface to 'Lady Barbarina' (1884) we are told of the tendency 'perceptive as well as reflective too, of the

¹⁸ Imagining and Thinking: A Psychological Analysis (London, 1957), p. 11.

braver imagination' (AN, 203); in Roderick Hudson Rowland says, '"but to an artist who loves his work there is no lost time. Everything he looks at teaches or suggests something"' (pp. 60-61). Rowland's words are very close to James's in his 'Art of Fiction', where he advises the novelist 'to try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost', since

experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airbourne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative ... it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations (PP, 388).

The genesis of The Princess Casamassima, to mention only one of James's fictional works, is a fine illustration of the artist 'on whom nothing is lost': 'There was a moment at any rate when they [the London streets] offered me no image more vivid than that of some individual sensitive nature or fine mind.... It seemed to me I had only to imagine such a spirit intent enough and troubled enough, and to place it in presence of the comings and goings ... of the more fortunate than himself.... I arrived so at the history of little Hyacinth Robinson--he sprang up for me out of the London pavement' (AN, 60).

What James tries to embody in his fiction plays an important role in modern philosophical studies of the imagination. Imagination as an extension of perception is one of Edward Casey's views expounded in Imagining: A

Phenomenological Study: 'a given perceptual experience is extended, but by means of another kind of act which differs intrinsically from perception proper. This supplemental act is one of imagination, even though its function can be designated as a form of "paraperception"'. Because of its paraperceptual nature, Casey continues, 'imagining is an act by which the inherent partialness of perceptual experience is momentarily suspended... Through such paraperceiving, perceived and imagined components become interwoven as conjoint elements of a perceptual object or event which we are striving to apprehend more fully than we could by perception alone'. Perception and imagination, Casey emphasizes, are interdependent; without our imagination, our comprehension even of perceptual events is bound to be incomplete.¹⁹

This is why James did not stop with perception in his 'to see, to feel, and to understand', because perception is incomplete without imagination; perception--to see--has to be internalized--to feel in another's place, to image another's condition--in order to lead to understanding. In 'Julia Bride' (1908) James sensitively shows how tightly enmeshed understanding and imagining are: 'How in fact could you feel interest unless you should know, within you, some dim stir of imagination? There was nothing in the world of which Murray Brush was less capable than of such a dim stir, because you only

¹⁸ (London, 1976), pp. 139-40.

began to imagine when you felt some approach to a need to understand' (p. 526).

Imagination as the key to understanding our own actions, our own nature, is involved in one of Mary Warnock's approaches in her study of Imagination. By means of our imaginations, she shows, we can interpret present experience 'in the light of past and future experience'. Other twentieth-century figures, like Bruno Bettelheim and Jacob Bronowski, to mention two among many, share Warnock's view of the timelessness of the imagination.²⁰ Foreseeing different courses or various consequences of our actions are powers of the imagination which both George Eliot and Henry James seriously or humorously explored in their fictional works. When Tom in The Mill on the Floss rushes back home and expediently reports that it was Maggie who had pushed Lucy into the mud, we are told that 'Tom's imagination had not been rapid and capacious' enough to foresee that 'he too would be implicated' (p. 165). And in The Tragic Muse we see how Nick Dormer's imagination rescues him from marrying Julia: 'He had the impulse .. to see in a touching, an interesting light any forcibly presented side of the life of another.... Rapidly, at present, this change of scene took place before his spiritual eye. He found himself believing, that it depended but on his own conduct richly to alter the social outlook of the three women who clung

²⁰p. 179; The Uses of Enchantment; 'The Imaginative Mind in Art' in Imagination and the University (Canada, Toronto U. P. , 1964), pp. 3-19 (p. 8).

to him and who declared themselves forlorn' (pp. 251-52). His foresight in this case also prevents him from indulging in the renunciation of his own desires.

Foreseeing is, of course, some type of anticipating, and anticipating is what imagining and perceiving have in common. In a recent article in Psychology Today, Ulric Neisser states that perception involves more 'than the pickup of currently available information. There is always an element of anticipation, of readiness for what will appear next. Infants' skills of perceiving develop smoothly into skills of expecting and imagining'.²¹ It is easy to understand how skills of perceiving are related to those of imagining when we consider that to create often means to look in an unfamiliar way, to view from an unorthodox perspective. We have already seen how Coleridge, George Eliot, and Henry James felt that one of the artist's duties was to sharpen our perception, to train us to discover novelty in the familiar. Their conviction seems to be succinctly expressed by William James, who declares in Psychology: 'genius, in truth, means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way'. Connected to such kinds of perception, William James remarks (reminding us of Rowland's 'open doors'), is also our ability to resist our tendency, as we grow older, of 'assimilating impressions in any but the old ways'.²²

²¹'Understanding Psychological Man', Psychology Today, 16, no. 5 (May 1982), 44-59 (p. 45).

²²p. 328.

Assimilation of the object by the subject is another feature which imagination and perception share. Such fusion permeates explanations of nineteenth and twentieth-century theories of perception. Definitely organic terms, for instance, pervade George Henry Lewes's definition of perception, which he explains as 'the assimilation of the Object by the Subject, in the same way that Nutrition is the assimilation of the Medium by the Organism'.²³ In less scientific terms, yet conveying the same notion Eliot describes Daniel Deronda's perception, when sitting by the river opposite Kew Gardens: 'he was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape' (p. 229). The subject-object fusion seems to be an inevitable explanation of the process taking place during perception. Even Merleau-Ponty, who rejects such synthesis as idealistic, cannot help defining perception as the 'communication or communion, the taking up or completion by us of some extraneous intention'; or even more explicitly he asserts that 'to look at an object is to inhabit it', or 'to plunge oneself into it'.²⁴

Evidently Coleridge's impact on modern theories of perception is extraordinary. Whether it be the 'synthetic

²³Problems of Life and Mind, I, 189.

²⁴Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 320, 68, 67.

process or the active nature of perception, twentieth-century psychologists and philosophers seem to have taken up and enlarged upon Coleridge's beliefs. This is the case, for example, in long studies devoted to proving that perception is active: Ulric Neisser early on his book Cognitive Psychology recognizes perception as an 'active process'; A. R. Luria proves in The Working Brain that perception is both active and creative; and Merleau-Ponty in his Phenomenology of Perception describes perceptions as compositions--'the text of the external world is not so much copied, as composed'.²⁵

Compositions, needless to say, involve the perceiver's active interchange with the percept. The information provided by the percept is incomplete without the perceiver's own memory and imagination, as we saw in the case of the figure-ground phenomenon. Because of the knowledge which the perceiver derives from within, he can understand the world without. Perception then involves the interaction of both the outer and the inner worlds, an idea lyrically expressed by Romantics and Victorians.

For George Eliot the inward and outward are often fused so inextricably that it is difficult to distinguish sharply the one from the other: 'It seems difficult to limit--at least to limit with any precision--the possibility of confounding sense by impressions, derived from inward conditions, with those which are directly dependent on external stimulus. In fact, the division

²⁵ (New York, 1967), p. 16; An Introduction to Neuropsychology (London, 1978), p. 240; p. 9.

between within and without in this sense seems to become every year a more subtle and bewildering problem' (GEL, V, 280). We can, of course, see the romantic overtones of Eliot's belief; indeed, we can almost hear Wordsworth's lines from 'Tintern Abbey'

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear--both what they half
create--
and what perceive... (ll. 102-106).

We are also reminded of Coleridge's words from 'Dejection Ode'

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life does Nature live
(ll. 47-48).

In both cases we witness the active perceiver attributing qualities to the passive scene. An accurate, although ambiguous, embodiment of this idea occurs in the image of the eddy in the last lines of 'Dejection Ode':

To her may all things live, from pole to
pole
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
(ll. 135-36)

'Eddying' in this case is attractively effective because it successfully displays, as M. H. Abrams convincingly affirms, 'a ceaseless and circular interchange of life between soul and nature in which it is impossible to distinguish what is given from what is received'--exactly the point George Eliot makes.²⁶

²⁶Wordsworth, Poetical Works, pp. 163-65; The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by E. H. Coleridge (London, 1912), pp. 365, 368; The Mirror, p. 68.

The role of anticipation in perception is another manifestation of the inward-outward interaction. 'Even when we are broad awake, if we are in anxious expectation', Coleridge explains, 'how often will not the most confused sounds of nature be heard by us as articulate sound? for instance, the babbling of a brook will appear, for a moment, the voice of a Friend, for whom we are waiting, calling out our names.... a Likeness in part tends to become a likeness of the whole' (CCW, Coburn, IV, 118-19). William James seems to take up and enlarge upon Coleridge's point in his Psychology where he describes perception in terms of illusions. At times, he claims, 'we perceive a wrong object because our mind is full of the thought of it at the time, and any sensation which is in the least degree connected with it touches off, as it were, a train already laid, and gives us a sense that the object is really before us'. To illustrate this concept he uses as examples the sportsman who shoots a thrush, taking it for the woodcock he is expecting; the person who waits in the dark fearing a certain object and interprets any sudden sensation as that object; and proofreaders who miss misspelled words because they do not actually see every single letter of each word, but 'more than half of the words come out of their mind, and hardly half from the printed page'.²⁷

The role of what William James calls 'the mental supplement' to perception is also well demonstrated in

²⁷pp. 321-22.

novels. Dorothea's conviction, for instance, that Rosamond and Will are in love, when she goes to give Rosamond a letter for Lydgate, is a brilliant example of perception influenced by anticipation:

Dorothea had less outward vision than usual, this morning, being filled with images of things as they had been and were going to be. She found herself on the other side of the door without seeing anything remarkable, but immediately she heard a voice speaking in low tones which startled her as with a sense of dreaming in daylight, and advancing unconsciously a step or two beyond the projecting slab of a bookcase, she saw, in the terrible illumination of a certainty which filled up all outlines, something which made her pause motionless without self-possession enough to speak (p. 832).

The 'mental supplement' to this visual perception is obvious at the beginning of the paragraph, where we are informed that Dorothea 'had less outward vision than usual this morning' and that she was preoccupied with an imaginative experience, 'things as they had been and were going to be'. Under the circumstances, how could she see 'in the terrible illumination of a certainty'? The intended irony here is apparent. A sense of anticipation of a dreaded event is also revealed by the phrase modifying certainty--'which filled up all outlines'. And anticipation, partly explains Isabel's vision of the ghost Ralph had told her she could see only if she had suffered enough.

Dorothea's case further illustrates what psychologists term 'selective attention', which means a perceptual choice; that is, 'while we are looking at one

event, we see little of others, even if they are equally present to the eye'. And both imagining and perceiving, Ulric Neisser declares, 'involve choice'.²⁸ Ruskin also describes a painter's 'selective attention' and points out that even a faithful copy of a landscape always involves some kind of 'selection, and more or less wilful assertion, of one fact in preference to another'. This selection, Ruskin believes, should be made 'under the influence of sentiment' (MP, IV, 32). Merleau-Ponty seems to be proving Ruskin's point when he asserts in his Phenomenology of Perception that our first reaction to a perceptual event is emotional and subjective rather than objective. His quotation of Koffka's The Growth of Mind illustrates his point well: '" an object looks attractive or repulsive before it looks black or blue, circular or square"'.²⁹ This, in turn, is another manifestation of the interplay between the inward and the outward that takes place during perception, and demonstrates the role that feeling plays in perception.

The role of emotion is even more crucial in our perception of works of art, which are so tightly interwoven with emotions that an art lover, as Gombrich maintains in Art and Illusion, 'may go through life without ever realizing to what an extent the pictures he loves are crisscrossed by subjective contours of his own making. If he were ever to strip them of these

²⁸ 'Understanding Psychological Man', p. 45.

²⁹ p. 24.

projections, merely a meaningless armature might well be all that would remain'.³⁰ The Spoils of Poynton could serve as a sensitive illustration of Gombrich's point. Mrs Gereth obstinately refuses to give up her treasures to Mona because the girl cannot possibly appreciate valuable objects to which no memories or feelings have become attached. But for Mrs Gereth, the passionate art lover, they are '"living things ... they know me, they return the touch of my hand. But I could let them all go, since I have to so strangely, to another affection, another conscience. There's a care they want, there's sympathy that draws out their beauty' (p. 31).

Mrs Gereth's statements also reveal the synesthetic quality of perception; it is not only sight but touch too that is involved in her enjoyment. 'Synesthetic perception is the rule', Merleau-Ponty shows in his study on perception. Sight does not bring us only colours or light but also other qualities. Because the 'senses intercommunicate', we can see 'the hardness and brittleness of glass ... the springiness of steel, the ductility of red-hot steel'. And, he continues, 'in the jerk of the twig from which a bird had just flown, we read its flexibility or elasticity, and it is thus that a branch of an apple-tree or a birch are immediately distinguishable'; furthermore, when we hear 'the hardness and unevenness of cobbles in the rattle of a carriage ... we speak appropriately of a "soft", "dull" or "sharp"

³⁰A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, fourth edition (London, 1972), p. 176.

sound'. Merleau-Ponty even claims that we 'perceive hardly any object ... just as we do not see the eyes of a familiar face, but simply its look and its expression'. In a journey through Paris each perception, 'the cafés, people's faces ... the quays ... stands out against the city's whole being, and confirms that there is a certain style or a certain significance which Paris possesses'.³¹ Henry James describes the same effect in a strikingly similar manner in his short story, 'A Passionate Pilgrim' (1875):

There is a rare emotion, familiar to every intelligent traveller, in which the mind seems to swallow the sum total of its impressions at a gulp. You take in the whole place, whatever it be. You feel England, you feel Italy, and the sensation involves for the moment a kind of thrill.... Since my landing in England I had been waiting for it to arrive. A bottle of tolerable Burgundy, at dinner, had perhaps unlocked to it the gates of sense; it arrived now with irresistible force (pp. 351-52).

A bottle of burgundy 'unlocks' the senses and the revel of their intercommunication begins. And in The Bostonians (1886) music mingles with the warmth and the fragrance of the burning logs and acquires a perfume of its own: 'His guests sat scattered in the red firelight, listening, silent, in comfortable attitudes; there was a faint fragrance from the burning logs, which mingled with the perfume of Schubert and Mendelssohn; the covered lamps made a glow here and there, and the cabinets and

³¹pp. 229, 230, 281.

brackets produced brown shadows, out of which some precious object gleamed' (p. 134).

Is it possible then to follow Bachelard's suggestion and 'consider literary documents as realities of the imagination ... as real as those of perception'? (PS, p. 158). From the similarities which perception and imagination share, this does not seem to be an impossible task. To begin with, we have found that both imagination and perception depend on an interplay between the outer and the inner, are both synthetic, constructive, integrative processes. How is the one then distinguished from the other? Ruskin offers an implicit distinction though he does not, in this case, juxtapose imagination with perception but concentrates on imagination: 'And its great function being the calling forth, or back, that which is not visible to bodily sense, it has of course been made to take delight in the fulfilment of its proper function, and pre-eminently to enjoy, and spend its energy on, things past and future, or out of sight, rather than things present, or in sight' (MP, III, 181). In order to understand imagination better, Harold Rugg suggests, one needs to distinguish it from perception and memory. And his distinction sounds much like Ruskin's description of the imagination. Whereas perception 'involves sensory experiences, awareness of present data, whether external or intraorganic', imagination (and here Rugg borrows the Oxford dictionary definition) '"is forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses ... the power which the mind has of forming

concepts beyond those derived from external objects". Rugg's definitions of the imagination, perception and memory become clearer through his examples of images from each process: 'I look at the skyline of New York from the New Jersey palisades, close my eyes and have a memory image. I read a descriptive account of Chengtu, which I have never seen, try to imagine what it looks like, and I have an imagination image'.³² Although imagination is frequently based on perception, in literature, quite clearly, it asserts its independence. By means of our imagination, we can see objects or events which we have never before experienced. This is why imagination is more expansive than perception, an idea vividly embodied by various images in both The Portrait of a Lady and Middlemarch as we shall see.

It is with the expansive nature of the imagination, its openness and freedom that Bachelard is primarily concerned in L'Air et les songes. Image is not as appropriate to the imagination as 'imaginary', Bachelard maintains in this book; more precisely, 'the value of an image is measured by the extent of its imaginary halo. Thanks to the imaginary, the imagination is essentially open, escapist'. And 'unmaking the images furnished by perception' is one of the powers which characterize the openness of the imagination: 'It is above all the faculty of freeing us from the initial images, of changing images. If there is no changing of images, an unexpected

³²pp. 36-7.

union of images, there is no imagination, there is no action of imagining'. And he continues, briefly touching upon memory and perception: 'If an image that is present does not make us think of an image that is absent, if one occasional image does not set going a whole host of wandering images, there is no imagination. There is perception, a memory of perception, a familiar memory, the customary colors and shapes'. In La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté, disintegration precedes creation: 'a literary image destroys the lazy images of perception. Literary imagination disimagines to better reimagine'.³³ Bachelard's 'destroys' here sounds much like Coleridge's 'dissolves' in order to recreate; Coleridge's 'diffuses, dissipates' has become Bachelard's 'unmaking the images furnished by perception'. And Coleridge's germ becomes Bachelard's image which sets 'going a whole host of wandering images.'

Of course, it is impossible to deal with germinal ideas or images without taking memory into consideration; and indeed this is one of James's points in his prefaces. Modern artists also emphasize the value of a good memory to creativity and show how perception, memory, and imagination are all interwoven tightly in the creative act. A poet's mind, T. S. Eliot remarks, is 'magnetised ... automaticallly' to 'an image, a phrase, a word' that he might use years later; a childhood memory, for example, might lie dormant in the mind for many years and

³³ Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement (Paris, 1943), p. 7; (Paris, 1948), p. 26.

then, suddenly it may 're-appear in some verse-context charged with great imaginative pressure'; for Stephen Spender, memory is 'the root of creative genius' because it 'enables the poet to connect the immediate moment of perception which is called "inspiration", with past moments in which he has received like impressions'. And this process of relating 'enables the poet, through the moment, to strike a kind of chord across time, made up of notes which are similar impressions felt at different times'.³⁴

George Eliot's account of the prototype of Sir Christopher in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story' (1858), seems to illustrate Spender's and T. S. Eliot's ideas: 'Certain vague traditions about Sir Roger Newdegate ... which I heard when I was a child are woven into the character of Sir Christopher Cheverel, and the house he improved into a charming Gothic place'. The rest of the story though, George Eliot asserts, 'is spun out of the subtlest web of minute observation and inward experience, from my first childish recollections up to recent years' (GEL, II, 459-60). George Eliot's letters often reveal a conscious effort to vivify old memories, which, in turn, became germs for her stories. In August 1859, for instance, she declined Barbara Bodichon's invitation to visit her in Hastings, because at that time, she explained, 'my mind works with the most freedom and the keenest sense of

³⁴The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, second edition (London, 1964), pp. 78-9; World Within World (New York, 1951), p. 53.

poetry in my remotest past, and there are many strata to be worked through before I can begin to use artistically any material I may gather in the present' (GEL, III, 128-29). At the time, Eliot was working on The Mill on the Floss; and it is a well-known fact that her memories from childhood have played a major role in this novel. Early in her biography of George Eliot, Ruby Redinger shows how, gradually in her career, Eliot discovered that 'Looking Inward' meant 'Looking Backward', that her past 'had been a necessary apprenticeship to what she called her "true vocation" of novel writing'.³⁵ Her fondness for the past is perhaps the reason why all of her novels are either set in the past or show the effect of the past on, and its significance to, the present.

Henry James's remarkable memory is also evident in his Prefaces and Notebooks as well as in his Autobiography. Within his novels James also assigned a past to his characters; his preface to The Aspern Papers (1888) seems to crystallize the reason: 'I delight in a palpable imaginable visitable past--in the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table (AN, 164). At the end of The Wings of the Dove (1902), Densher's thoughts reveal how imagination often facilitates memory. Reminiscing about Milly, Densher recalls that 'his presence on the first occasion, not as

³⁵ George Eliot: The Emergent Self (New York, 1975), p. 11.

the result of a summons, but as a friendly fancy of his own, had had quite another value; and though our young man could scarce regard that value as recoverable, he yet reached out in imagination to a renewal of the old contact' (II, 301). James's prefaces to his novels also reveal the tight interconnection between memory and imagination, as the germs, after a time of incubation, spring to life. For George Eliot, similarly, a germ remained dormant in her mind 'till time had made my mind a nidus in which it [germ] could fructify' (GEL, III, 176). And in the preface to The American, James refers to the 'resurrection of the germ for the novel' (AN, 23). For both novelists, the beginning of the creative act, the perceived image, becomes the memory image, which is transformed into the imaginary image, the beginning of life. Naturally by the time a memory is resurrected it has undergone transformations; it cannot be the copy of the original experience.

In this respect, Eliot and James anticipated modern psychologists like Ulric Neisser and F. C. Bartlett who regard memory as a constructive faculty. In the conclusion of Remembering, F. C. Bartlett remarks that the 'description of memories as "fixed and lifeless" is merely an unpleasant fiction ... memory is itself constructive'. Memory, he continues, 'and all the life of images and words which goes with it, is one with the age-old acquisition of the distance senses, and with that development of constructive imagination and constructive thought wherein at length we find the most complete

release from the narrowness of presented time and place'.³⁶

Reading a novel can indeed be a constructive activity involving memory, perception, and imagination. Wolfgang Iser in his Implied Reader delightfully shows how the three activities are enmeshed in reading; his description of the reading process sounds very much like an account of the creative process: 'Whatever we have read sinks into our memory and is foreshortened. It may later be evoked again and set against a different background with the result that the reader is enabled to develop hitherto unforeseeable connections'. Our memory of literary events though, Iser remarks, 'can never reassume its original shape, for this would mean that memory and perception were identical, which is manifestly not so. The new background brings to light new aspects of what we had committed to memory; conversely these, in turn, shed their light on the new background, thus arousing more complex anticipations'. So, by discovering the relations among past, present, and future, the reader 'actually causes the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections'. These connections, Iser believes, are essentially 'the product of the reader's mind working on the raw material of the text, though they are not the text itself--for this consists just of sentences, statements, information'.³⁷

³⁶ (London, 1932), pp. 311-12, 314.

³⁷ (London, 1974), p. 278.

But what assists our memory in reading? In her long study The Art of Memory, Frances Yates demonstrates that it has been known since the time of classical Greece and Rome that images have been used for mnemonics. At one point she quotes one of Bacon's statements from his De Augmentis scientiarum which sounds much like Simonides's or Cicero's remarks on mnemonics: 'Emblems bring down intellectual to sensible things; for what is sensible always strikes the memory stronger, and sooner impresses itself than the intellectual.... and therefore it is easier to retain the image of ... an apothecary ranging his boxes, an orator making a speech ... than the corresponding notions of invention, disposition'.³⁸ George Eliot was finely aware of the value of images in capturing the reader's attention: 'the modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images and pictures in grasping the attention' (Essays, 445).

It is useful to our understanding of memory to know that there are two kinds of retention: the iconic and the verbal. Since most of our experiences occur while 'our verbal system is alert', Michael Gazzaniga claims in The Integrated Mind, 'it would seem at first glance to be unlikely that information is stored in the verbal system's absence, thereby making the information inaccessible to language'. Yet, Gazzaniga continues,

³⁸ (London, 1966), p. 371.

this is the case with the very young child, in his preverbal years: 'Years later, these early states can emerge, to the total surprise of the verbal system'.³⁹ Other psychologists, John Seamon for example, agree that the 'development of an imagery representational system precedes that of the language system', and that 'early childhood memories may be available in the visual system, but inaccessible through the verbal system'.⁴⁰ Again we can see George Eliot's acuteness when we recall, in this case, her statement, 'our earliest, strongest impresssions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images' (Essays, 445). Henry James shows his keen awareness of this truth in his preface to What Maisie Knew (1897), an idea which the novel itself repeatedly illustrates: 'Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them; their vision is at any moment much richer, their apprehension even constantly stronger, than their prompt, their at all producible, vocabulary' (AN, 145).

The role of the verbal system, on the other hand, according to Gazzaniga, is 'to make sense out of the emotional and other mental systems and, in so doing, allow man, with his mental complexity, the illusion of a

³⁹ (London, 1978), pp. 158, 159.

⁴⁰ 'Coding and Retrieval Processes and the Hemispheres of the Brain' in Hemisphere Function in the Human Brain (London, 1974), pp. 184-203 (p. 201); see also, J. S. Bruner, R. R. Olver and others, eds., Studies in Cognitive Growth (New York, 1966).

unified self'.⁴¹ Ruskin seems actually to have anticipated modern psychologists in his explanation of the verbal and nonverbal encoding. 'Some facts', he states, 'exist in the brain in a verbal form as known, but not conceived; as, for instance, that it [an object] was heavy or light ... and which fact we may recollect without any conception of the object at all'. Other facts about the same object, Ruskin continues, are stored in the brain in 'a visible form, not always visible, but visible at will, as its being of such a colour, or having such and such a complicated shape' (MP, II, 229).

Yet the emotional part of an experience proves that events are not encoded in two ways only but rather multidimensionally. Because incidents in our life are 'multifaceted', Gazzaniga points out, 'different aspects of experience are differentially stored in the brain'. As a result, when a past experience is remembered, it is usually a 'multidimensional experience involving time, space, colors, sounds, smell, temperature, and a variety of other stimuli'.⁴² Henry James illustrates well the multidimensionality of memory in Mr. Longdon's case in The Awkward Age. Early in the novel, we are told that he appeared to lose himself 'in the deep memories to attest which he had survived alone; then he sighed out as if the taste of it all came back to him with a faint sweetness: "I think they must both have been good to me' (p. 32).

⁴¹The Integrated Mind, p. 155.

⁴²pp. 132, 137.

Thus a memory here is 'deep', it has a taste of 'faint sweetness', and it is imbedded in an emotional aura-- 'they must have been good to me'.

A novelist, then, tries to record an experience in our memory multidimensionally. Because of its form, the novel has to appeal primarily to the verbal encoding. Yet, through images, the novelist is also stimulating the nonverbal encoding; furthermore, he has to rely heavily on the iconic in order to assist our memory of the events taking place in the realm of the novel. Modern psychology describes a belief which a good novelist always takes into consideration: 'the relational organisation of mental imagery appears to be important in determining its mnemonic efficacy'.⁴³ Unlike a psychologist, however, a novelist expresses this notion in more concrete, vivid, and appealing language. The importance of the place each image occupies seems to have originated in Simonides's concept of mnemonics. Simonides urged people who wanted to train their memory 'to select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things'.⁴⁴ The 'relational organisation' of the images in Middlemarch seems to explain why Dorothea looking out of her window, after the night of internal turmoil, is an image that will remain in our minds years

⁴³John Richardson, Mental Imagery and Human Memory (New York, 1980), p. 144.

⁴⁴Frances Yates, p. 2.

after we have read the novel. It is not the vividness of the image as much as its place in the novel that determines its lasting quality.

Experimental psychology, Bachelard contends in his Poetics of Reverie, fails to explain how imagination and memory interact; 'the remembered past is not simply a past of perception. Since one is remembering, the past is already designated in a reverie as an image value. From their very origin, the imagination colors the paintings it will want to see again' (p. 105). The distinction between memory and imagination, Bachelard believes, becomes especially difficult in 'the realm of beloved images harbored in memory since childhood'. And he continues:

These memories which live by the image and in virtue of the image become, at certain times of our lives and particularly during the quiet age, the origin and matter of a complex reverie: the memory dreams, and reverie remembers. When the reverie of remembering becomes the germ of a poetic work, the complex of memory and imagination becomes more tightly meshed.... The imagination ceaselessly revives and illustrates the memory (PR, p. 20).

Indeed, quite frequently, in Middlemarch and in The Portrait of a Lady, as we shall see, the imagination brilliantly colours 'the paintings' it wants to see again. And although reverie or meditation does play an important role in both novels, it does not become a germ of a work, but it initiates an important revelation, a higher understanding of the self, the world, or others--indeed, a time of rebirth or regeneration.

Bachelard's idea that the creative act becomes possible through the enmeshing of reverie, memory, perception and imagination had been anticipated by Ruskin. In his description of Turner's work in the fourth book of his Modern Painters, Ruskin seems eager to make the distinction between reverie (though he does not use 'reverie' in particular), and dream, which Bachelard often makes in his Poetics of Reverie. Turner's works, Ruskin maintains, are not like dreams, 'for in a dream there is just this kind of confused remembrance of the forms of things which we have seen long ago, associated by new strange laws'. Whereas 'common dreams are grotesque and disorderly ... Turner's dream [is] natural and orderly'. In the same passage, Ruskin shows how the creative act is the result of the fusion of memory, perception and imagination. 'Whenever Turner really tried to compose, and made modifications of his subjects on principle', Ruskin contends, 'he did wrong, and spoiled them'. In Ruskin's view, Turner did well only when he remained 'in a kind of passive obedience to his first vision, that vision being composed primarily of the strong memory of the place itself which he had to draw; and ~~sec~~ondarily, of memories of other places ... associated, in a harmonious and helpful way, with the new central thought'. (MP, IV, 41).

Like George Eliot and Henry James, Ruskin seems to teach that the artist has to remain receptive and faithful to the germ (usually originating in perception), which undergoes transformations by memory and is

fructified by the imagination. Taking into consideration the processes involved in the creative act, Coleridge developed sympathetic or recreative criticism, a critical approach which takes the reader or the critic through processes which the artist himself experienced.

Coleridge's criticism, as we shall see in the following chapter, bridges the distance between the critic and the artist by training the critic to see and feel and understand as an artist.

CHAPTER 3

'INTO THE MAGIC CIRCLE OF CREATION'

As you read, the fictitious universe of the poem seems to expand and advance out of its remoteness, to surge musically about your senses, and merge itself utterly in the universe which surrounds you. The summer brightness of the real world goes half-way to meet it; and the beautiful figures which throb with life in Mr. Morris's stories pass lightly to and fro between the realm of poetry and the mild atmosphere of fact.

The melody in James's criticism of William Morris's poetry in 1868 is unmistakably romantic. Because of his receptiveness, a state almost of reverie, James--here the ideal reader--enters the fictional universe, or allows it to open and expand towards him; in the process, he sees the reader's delight as the direct result of the writer's achievement. Because 'The Earthly Paradise' appeared 'to reflect so clearly and forcibly the poet's natural sympathies with the external world, and his joy in personal contact with it' the reader has 'obtained something very like a sense of physical transposition, without physical or intellectual weariness' (VR, 72).

What James calls Morris's sympathy with the external world and 'his joy in personal contact with it' sounds very much like Coleridge's joy in his 'Dejection Ode', which he describes as the poet's ability to become one with the external world, to experience the synthesis of the subject with the object. Indeed, James, in his criticism of Morris's poetry, seems to have achieved the 'coalescence' Coleridge revered. But how does the reader's 'physical transposition' actually occur? Coleridge gives a convincing answer in his Shakespearean Criticism. When referring to Shakespeare's works, as we have seen, he extols their 'power of so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words--to make him see everything--and this without exciting any painful or laborious attention' (SC, I, 214). In his lyrical criticism of Morris's poetry, James seems at times 'to lose the consciousness of words' and actually to see the 'beautiful figures' in the 'Earthly Paradise', or to 'inhabit the bright and silent workroom of a great Greek artist ... standing among shapes and forms of perfect beauty' in 'Pygmalion' (VR, 78).

James's 'physical transposition' further reminds us of Coleridge's distinction between prose and poetry in which he attributed to poetry 'that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition;-- and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or

incidents contemplated by the poet' (SC, I, 163-64). By empathizing with Morris's 'natural sympathies', James does indeed exhibit 'a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects ... contemplated by the poet', and in so doing, he experiences 'that pleasurable emotion' which the poet himself felt while composing his work. James would most probably have qualified as the ideal critic whom Coleridge had in mind when he defined 'genial criticism' as an attempt 'to judge in the same spirit in which the Artist produced or ought to have produced' (BL, II, 222).

Although scattered throughout his works, Coleridge's comments on sympathetic criticism could be summed up by four principles: an attempt to recapture the artist's feeling; a concentration on the 'excellences' rather than the defects of a work; a judgement derived from intrinsic rather than extrinsic rules; an oscillation from parts to the whole. I have focused on these four principles, primarily because they have been adopted and amplified by modern critics practicing recreative or organic criticism. We have already briefly touched upon some of these concepts in chapter one, but my emphasis here will be on their usefulness as critical approaches to literature.

To begin with, a critic, according to Coleridge, should respond to the feeling which inspired the artist's work. This is a concept congenial to both George Eliot and Henry James. Writing to one of her admirers in 1873, Eliot described an author's aim in Coleridgean terms:

'What one's soul thirsts for is the word which is the refle[ction] of one's own aim and delight in writing--the word which shows that what one meant has been perfectly seized, that the emotion which stirred one in writing is repeated in the mind of the reader' (GEL, V, 374).

Almost identically James had expressed this idea a few years earlier in an essay on Alexandre Dumas: 'the impression that he [the artist] should aim to produce on the reader's mind with his work must have much in common with the impression originally produced on his own mind by his subject' (NR, 226).

In order to capture the artist's feeling, the critic should not be concerned with the negative but rather with the positive qualities of a work. In Chapter XXII of Biographia Literaria, in which Coleridge analyzes Wordsworth's poetry, he emphasizes that if a critic wants to 'appreciate the defects of a great mind it is necessary to understand previously its characteristic excellences' (II, 97). Using the same word, 'excellences', George Eliot conveys Coleridge's concept in her review (1856) of the third book of Ruskin's Modern Painters, where she connects artistic value to the feeling it arouses in the audience: 'we value a writer not in proportion to his freedom from faults, but in proportion to his positive excellences--to the variety of thought he contributes and suggests, to the amount of gladdening and energizing emotions he excites'.¹

¹'Art and Belles lettres', Westminster Review, American edition, 65 (1856), 343-56 (p. 343).

Naturally, both beauties and defects can be found within the work itself, and since, as we have seen, organic form evolves from within, it follows that the critic should look into the work itself to discover the rules by which he will examine it. For James such view represented the ideal critic 'who has, a priori, no rule for a literary production but that it shall have genuine life'.²

The rules, then, are intrinsic not extrinsic. This is another of the principles of recreative criticism which Coleridge set forth in his Shakespearean Criticism: 'The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself'. Coleridge sees in life order and organization; this is why he defines a living body as 'an organized one,--and what is organization, but the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means!' (I, 223). Tightly connected with organic unity, as we have seen, and as Coleridge indicates here, is the interrelationship of the whole with its parts. Furthermore, Coleridge felt the need to justify his critical approach to poetry early in his Biographia Literaria by anchoring it in the fundamental processes of the human mind: 'I labored at a solid foundation, on which permanently to ground my opinions in the component faculties of the human mind itself, and their comparative dignity and importance' (BL, I, 14).

²Introduction to the American edition of Rudyard Kipling's Mine Own People (Boston, 1899), p.12.

An emotional response to experience is primary, as studies on perception, imagination, and memory indicate. and in most experiences, first we feel, and then we try to understand or to explain why we felt in a certain way. This is one of Bachelard's points in his book, L'Eau et les rêves: 'It is not knowledge of the real which makes us passionately love it. It is rather feeling which is the primary and fundamental value. One starts by loving nature without knowing it, without seeing it well, while actualizing in things a love which is grounded elsewhere. Then, one seeks it in detail because one loves it on the whole, without knowing why'; the same pattern, as Bachelard has shown in L'Air et les songes, is repeated in an aesthetic experience--first astonishment, then an attempt to understand it.³

Freud's essay on Michelangelo's Moses attractively illustrates this pattern. First Freud is powerfully moved by the statue, then he tries to comprehend the reason why, and finally he realizes that the powerful impact the statue has on him must lie in the artist's intention. 'I realize', he says (sounding like the ideal critic George Eliot and Henry James envisioned) 'that it [the effect of the statue] cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension; what he [the artist] aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the

³ (Paris, 1942), p. 155; p. 193.

impetus to create'.⁴ By responding first emotionally, and then intellectually, the critic, the reader, the beholder, follows the steps the artist took.

Feeling is the primary quality of the imagination. One cannot speak of the imagination without relating it somehow to feeling, simply because, as Ruskin points out, the 'Imagination is based upon, and appeals to, a deep heart feeling' (MP, II, 298). Similarly, Henry James claims that 'the only lasting fictions are those which have spoken to the reader's heart, and not to his eye' (NR, 22). For Ruskin, 'all true and deep emotion is imaginative, both in conception and expression'. Our ability to see mentally, he continues, depends on our ability to feel keenly: 'the mental sight becomes sharper with every full beat of the heart'. Imagination enables us to 'forget ourselves and enter, like possessing spirits, into the bodies of things about us' (MP, II, 204).

No doubt, feeling was indispensable to the genesis of a work of art for both George Eliot and Henry James. 'But what is fiction other than an arrangement of events or feigned correspondences according to predominant feeling'? Eliot asks in her 'Notes on Form in Art'; and later on she says, 'poetry begins when passion weds thought by finding expression in an image'. Earlier in this essay, she has already mentioned that she considers poetry 'in its wider sense as including all literary

⁴Creativity and the Unconscious (London, 1958), p. 12.

production of which it is the prerogative and not the reproach that the choice and sequence of images and ideas ... are more or less not only determined by emotion but intended to express it' (Essays, 434-35). Similarly, in his preface to The Portrait of a Lady, James sees feeling and perception as inextricably interwoven: 'recognising so promptly the one measure of the worth of a given subject, the question about it that, rightly answered disposes of all others--is it valid, in a word, is it genuine, is it sincere, the result of some direct impression or perception of life? There is I think no more nutritive or suggestive truth in this connection than that of the perfect dependence of the "moral" sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it' (AN, 45).

The emotional and the moral qualities of a work become fused in Coleridge's criticism of others. Whether representing the artist's effort in composing a work or the reader's response in interacting with it, feeling, for Coleridge, is an internal force. By juxtaposing constantly the external with the internal, the eye with the heart, perception with imagination, Coleridge seems to be primarily responsible for initiating an internal response to literature. His strongest objection to the unities of time and place, for instance, was based upon the belief that they appeal primarily to the senses. He praised The Tempest highly because he felt 'it addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty'. A complicated scenery for the production of the play, he

thought, could undermine its effect, because it would stimulate an outward response at the expense of an inward enjoyment: 'For the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within,--from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the mere external senses of seeing and hearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within' (SC, I, 132).

Coleridge's analogy between the mind and a living plant also pointed to the forces within; even its external form he emphasized, is determined by internal processes--'with the same pulse effectuates its own secret growth'. Organic form is defined in similar terms: it is 'innate', since 'it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form'. And he continues, 'each exterior is the physiognomy of the being within, its true image reflected and thrown out from the concave mirror' (SC, I, 224)

Twentieth-century critics offer different explanations as to the origin and significance of the cultivation and exploration of the internal world in preference to the external. The shift from the external to the internal was the turning point in the history of art as Giordano Orsini shows in Organic Unity in Ancient and Later Poetics: 'This basic shift in point of view from the external to the internal corresponds to the

general trend of modern speculation inward rather than outward, or to the subjective rather than the objective'.⁵ Already in Middlemarch, we can see Dorothea's preoccupation with the world within, especially at times of emotional crises when the external world seems to offer no solution to her problems. And of course, with Henry James the internal world takes over the external and in his later novels the adventures of the mind seem to be the only subjects developed. The turn inward is often traced to Romanticism. In speaking about the Romantic poet in The Romantic Assertion, F. A. Foakes seems to offer at the same time an attractive explanation for the novelist's fascination with the world within: 'The Romantic poet employed the power of self-intuition to restore order to a world which had ceased to afford ready-made images of order, in the way it had done for Shakespeare and for Pope'.⁶

Whether the movement inward originated in the Romantic era or earlier in the concept of organic form it is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the recreative critic in focusing inward, that is, in approaching a work by the standards it dictates, he is also following the processes the creative act involves; for the creative act, as Harold Rugg convincingly shows, 'takes its cue primarily from the

⁵ (London, 1975), p. 84.

⁶ (London, 1958), p. 43.

inside-identification point of view; that is, organically from the center outward, not mechanistically from the outside looking in'. Furthermore, the recreative critic's method is very much like the Romantic poet's purpose which, according to Albert Gérard, 'is not to fabricate an artifact according to a formal pattern preexisting in his mind'. And in following the transformations of the germ within a certain work, the critic seems to trace what Albert Gérard calls the Romantic poet's aim 'to provide a total and accurate rendering of the germinal idea which stirs his imagination'.⁷

From George Eliot's and Henry James's notebooks, letters, and critical essays, we can see that the germinal idea for their novels most often originates in an image. The germ of Adam Bede, for instance, Eliot relates, 'was an anecdote told me by my Methodist Aunt Samuel' who 'had visited a condemned criminal, a very ignorant girl who had murdered her child and refused to confess' (GEL, II, 502). In a letter to his wife, John Blackwood alludes to Silas Marner (1861) as the story which George Eliot claimed that it 'sprang from her childish recollection of a man with a stoop and expression of face that led her to think he was an alien from his fellows' (GEL, III, 427). And there is enough evidence to believe that the germ of Gwendolen Harleth was a young girl whom she had seen gambling during her stay at Hambourg (GEL, V, 314). The same is true for

⁷Imagination, p. 291; English Romantic Poetry (Berkeley, 1968), p. 260.

most of James's 'germs'. In his account of the germ of The Ambassadors in his Notebooks, he gives the particulars of the incident, adding, 'but I mention these slightly irrelevant things only to show that I saw the scene of my young friend's anecdote' and later on, he urges himself, 'but think of the place itself again first--the charming June afternoon in Paris, the tea under the trees, the "intimate" nook consecrated to "artistic literary" talk'.⁸ Referring to The American, he echoes Wordsworth's 'feelings recollected in tranquillity' as he tells us, 'I have ... found it difficult to write of places under too immediate an impression--the impression that prevents standing off and allows neither space nor time for perspective. The image has had for the most part to be dim if the reflexion was to be ... both sharp and quiet' (AN, 27). And 'the image en disponibilité', is charged with a germinal property' in the case of The Portrait of a Lady (AN, 44); similarly, regarding The Awkward Age, 'the seed sprouted in that vast nursery of sharp appeal and concrete images' (AN, 99). Contemplating the origin of the Tragic Muse, he regrets not being able to recall the 'precious first moment of consciousness of the idea to which it was to give form; to recognise in it ... the effect of some particular sharp impression or concusssion'. Such moments, such 'remembered glimmers', embody a 'clear vision of what one may have intended, and without that

⁸p. 373.

vision no straight measure of what one may have succeeded in doing ' (AN, 79). Eliot's and James's approach to the composition of their novels resembles Turner's composition of his paintings. Talking literally about the pictorial, Ruskin declares that Turner 'never seems to have gone back to a place to look at it again, but, as he gained power, to have painted and repainted it as first seen, associating with it certain new thoughts or new knowledge, but never shaking the central pillar of the old image' (MP, IV, 42).

Apparently so dissimilar in their interests, Eliot, James, and Coleridge share the same conviction about the nature of the germ. They all agree, as we have seen, that the germ embodies opposites. Since the germ potentially contains the whole, as an acorn is potentially an oak, it is natural to assume that the novel grows through opposites. Like Coleridge in his Shakespearean Criticism, Ruskin refers to Shakespeare's contrasts (Prince Henry opposed to Falstaff, Cordelia to Regan, and so on) in his description of 'true idealism' in Modern Painters and he offers a convincing explanation for the role of contrasts in a work of art. Only the 'meaner idealists disdain the naturalism, and are shocked at the contrasts', Ruskin maintains. But a 'man who can see truth at all', Ruskin emphasizes, 'sees it wholly, and neither desires nor dares to mutilate it' (MP, III, 113).

In the same section, Ruskin sets forth the principle of 'naturalist idealism', which seems to have affected

both George Eliot and Henry James in the writing of their novels: 'This operation of true idealism holds, from the least things to the greatest. For instance, in the arrangement of the smallest masses of color, the false idealist, or even the purist, depends upon perfecting each separate hue, and raises them, all, as far as he can, into costly brilliancy'. The naturalist, though, Ruskin continues, takes 'the coarsest and feeblest colours of the things around him, and so interweaves and opposes them that they become more lovely than if they had all been bright'. A great artist, Ruskin believes, follows the same pattern in his treatment of the human form; he tries to 'associate inferior forms, so as not only to set off those which are most beautiful, but to bring out clearly what good there is in the inferior forms themselves' (MP, III, 111-12).

In her review of this volume of Modern Painters, Eliot emphasized naturalist idealism, focusing on contrasts. The naturalist idealist, she says, 'accepts the weaknesses, faults, and wrongnesses in all things that it sees, but so places them that they form a noble whole, in which the imperfection of each several part is not only harmless, but absolutely essential, and yet in which whatever is good in each several part shall be completely displayed'.⁹ Ruskin's naturalist idealism and Eliot's explanation of the theory clarify Coleridge's principle of sympathetic criticism, namely, that even a

⁹Westminster Review, 65 (p. 346).

writer's defects can often be the paths leading us to a better understanding of his 'characteristic excellences'. More recently, Orsini explains how the synthesis or the final aesthetic integration in a given work brings together both defects and beauties: 'any particular that becomes part of a synthesis loses any character it may have had before and acquires the character of the synthesis. So a beautiful composition need not be made out of beautiful words or beautiful phrases. Any word or phrase in an aesthetic synthesis will become a component of its total beauty, whether originally beautiful or not'.¹⁰ Seen in isolation, parts may often seem unrelated, but an oscillation from the whole to the parts shows how they are integral of the whole.

This leads us to another principle of recreative criticism which unites early and modern organicist approaches. In designing a work of art, Coleridge thought, the artist should constantly keep in mind the relationship of the parts to the whole, should always have, what he calls, a 'surview' of the whole, 'which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole' (BL, II, 44). And regarding the critic, Coleridge also emphasized a holistic perspective; 'a true critic', he claimed, 'can

¹⁰Organic Unity in Ancient and Later Poetics, p. 29.

no more be such without placing himself on some central point, from which he may command the whole, that is some general rule, which, founded in reason, or the faculties common to all men, must therefore apply to each--than an astronomer can explain the movements of the solar system without taking his stand in the sun' (CCW, IV, 53).

Coleridge's view of the artist or the critic as commanding a central position seems to be an integral part of his theory of art as a cycle in 1815: 'the Common end of all narrative, nay of all, Poems is to convert a series into a Whole: to make those events which in real or imagined History move on in a strait Line, assume to our Understanding a circular motion--the snake with it's [sic] Tail in it's [sic] Mouth'. And he goes on to explain the cycle in metaphysical terms: 'Hence indeed the almost flattering and yet appropriate Term, Poesy--i.e. poiesis=making. Doubtless, to his eye, which alone comprehends all Past and all Future in one external Present, what to our short sight appears strait is but a part of the great Cycle--just as the calm Sea to us appears level, tho' it be indeed only part of a globe' (CCL, IV, 545).

Because a work, in its organic unity or form, resembles nature, it is inevitable that it, like nature, should be cyclical. 'For this is one proof of the essential vitality of nature', Coleridge in his 'Theory of Life' asserts, 'that she does not ascend as links in a suspended chain, but as the steps in a ladder; or rather she at one and the same time ascends as by a climax, and

expands as the concentric circles on the lake from the point to which the stone in its fall had given the first impulse' (CCW, I, 386). Ruskin too shows how curves are associated with nature, the organic and angles with the inorganic: 'A rose is rounded by its own soft ways of growth, a reed is bowed into tender curvature by the pressure of the breeze' (MP, IV, 239-40).

Whether we look into nineteenth or twentieth-century theories of the imagination, we very often encounter the idea of the imagination's cyclical nature. For Shelley, poetry 'enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight'.¹¹ George Poulet in his Metamorphoses of the Circle seems to expound Shelley's point and to concentrate on the centre in a Coleridgean sort of manner: 'The imagination is a circle; but chiefly, it is the center of a circle; a center from which radiate outward lines which place the central unity in rapport with the peripheral variety; in such a manner that one can say of the space which they embrace, that it is at once united and divided, multiple and organized'.¹² Ruskin also spoke of 'Imagination Penetrative' in terms of the centre. 'Every great conception of poet or painter', he claims, 'is held and treated by this faculty'. And every sentence of a work 'as it has been thought out from the heart, opens for us

¹¹ 'A Defence of Poetry', p. 118.

¹² translated by Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman (Baltimore, Maryland, 1966), p. 108.

a way down to the heart, leads us to the centre, and then leaves us to gather what more we may' (MP, II, 251-52).

The impact of the centre on the artist, his work, and his audience, is the subject of Rudolph Arnheim's recent book, The Power of the Center. 'Perfectly spherical structures', he explains at the outset, are rare in works of art, 'but just as almost every organic and inorganic object is shaped around a center, centrality is an indispensable structural property of any composition in the visual arts'. Arnheim also shows that a centre is not always in the middle, that only in geometry, 'where a center is defined by location alone' is this possible. His definition of what he calls the dynamic centre, 'as a center of a field of forces, a focus from which forces issue, and toward which forces converge', is close to Poulet's view of the centre as both 'receptive and diffusive'. For Arnheim, the 'interplay between various visual objects as centers of forces is the basis of composition'. Later on in his book, Arnheim considers, in somewhat Jamesian terms, the viewer as 'a powerful dynamic center'. Standing before a picture, the beholder 'acts as a component of the comprehensive space that involves viewer and picture. His eyes scan the pictorial surface in order to perceive its composition as a whole'. Then, at one point, 'the eyes single out a particular spot, making it the center of attention'.¹³

¹³ (Berkeley, 1982), pp. x, 3, 36, 37; Metamorphoses of the Circle, p. 78.

Like Arnheim, James demonstrated that the centre is not always in the middle of a composition. In his preface to The Wings of the Dove, he speaks of the centre of the work as 'resting on a misplaced pivot' (AN, 306). Yet he, like Coleridge in his criticism of Shakespeare's plays, invariably seems to say that the central characters 'plant' themselves in the centre, and are both 'diffusive and receptive'. George Eliot's awareness of the significance of the centre is especially well illustrated in Middlemarch, where she skillfully merges the image of the circle with that of the web. Georges Poulet's explanation of the significance of the web in eighteenth-century poetry seems to explain George Eliot's fascination with the image:

Just like the sun (that, in mythology, is not only an astral body but a living spirit), the spider web has the advantage of having, as a center, not only a base of operations and of convergence, but a cognitive and receptive force by whose operation what comes from outside is seized and experienced within. The cobweb is formed by a peripheric network which intercepts and annexes a certain number of objects. But it is also made of an animal and intelligent centrality, in which these objects find themselves metamorphosed in sensations and in ideas.... The spider not only devours, in a literal sense, the insects that it captures; it absorbs them also figuratively.¹⁴

Thus Poulet not only attributes to the web the features of the circle, but he also shows its organic nature;

¹⁴Metamorphoses of the Circle, pp. 55-6.

furthermore, his interpretation echoes Coleridge's description of the plant as internalizing the external.

By placing the critic in the centre, both Coleridge and Henry James seem to want to pull him away from the very beginning of the novel. The analogy of a work to a plant itself breaks the linearity of the novel, a procession of events starting at the beginning and concluding in the end. Like the plant, the novel grows not only in two directions--beginning and end--but in various courses. This is why the circle is an apt image for the novel; it illustrates well how all directions converge in one point, the centre. And because the centre is the germ, and the germ is potentially the whole, the centre is both the beginning and the end. The centre, then, is where the critic should place himself, if he is to command the whole.

The central position which Coleridge has chosen for the critic, implies a holistic rather than an analytic perspective. Yet the parts do have to come into consideration in both the case of a poem or a novel. In this respect, the analytic is not incompatible with the synthetic. Floyd Ratcliff in his article 'Contour and Contrast' examines the issue as it appears in the study of biology--a field fascinating to Coleridge. The analytic approach (used for the study of single cells), Ratcliff believes, although often productive, is inadequate when applied to the basic problems of biological science: 'how unitary structures and elementary processes are organized into the complex

functional systems that make up living organs and organisms'. Ratcliff concludes that the organic and the analytic approaches are 'neither incompatible nor mutually exclusive; they are complementary and advances in one frequently facilitate advances in the other'.¹⁵

The compatibility of the organic and the mechanical is demonstrated by Ruskin in his Stones of Venice (1853) where he maintains that 'to the Gothic workman the living foliage became a subject of intense affection', and that 'the original conception of Gothic architecture had been derived from vegetation--from the symmetry of avenues, and the interlacing of branches'. The organic and the mechanical are beautifully brought together in Ruskin's phrase, 'the look of mountain brotherhood between the cathedral and the Alp'. For Ruskin, the continuity between the two concepts is so unbroken that not only does he compare an architectural structure to a natural configuration, but he also reverses the comparison. In his Lectures on Architecture (1853), for instance, he compares the leaves of the common ash to the parts of a Gothic building, and does it so gracefully that one alternates from the natural to the architectural smoothly, effortlessly: 'they [the leaves] spring from the stalk precisely as a Gothic vaulted roof springs, each stalk representing a rib of the roof and the leaves its crossing stones; and the beauty of each of those leaves

¹⁵ 'Contour and Contrast' in *Recent Progress in Perception*, pp. 9-19 (p. 19).

is altogether to its terminating in the Gothic form, the pointed arch'.¹⁶

Coleridge too often fuses the organic into the inorganic; in one of his comments in his 'Theory of Life' he remarks: 'the arborescent forms on a frosty morning, to be seen on the window and pavement, must have some relation to the more perfect forms developed in the vegetable world' (CCW, I, 385). Yet the difference between the mechanical and the organic was always of crucial importance to Coleridge, as it is summarized in his juxtaposition of mechanistic with vital philosophy. The mechanistic philosophy, Coleridge asserts in the same essay, demands

for every mode and act of existence real or possible visibility, it knows only of distance and nearness, composition .. and decomposition, in short the relations of unproductive particles to each other; so that in every instance the result is the exact sum of the component quantities, as in arithmetical addition. This is the philosophy of Death.... In Life, and in the view of a vital philosophy, the two component counter-powers actually interpenetrate each other, and generate a higher third, including both the former (CCW, I, 399).

One of Coleridge's strongest objections to the mechanistic philosophy was the fact that it regarded the mind as passive. Precisely because he believed the mind to be active, he even later rejected the analogy of the mind to an Aeolian harp. In such an image, Coleridge thought, the mind is passive and has to depend on the

¹⁶Works, X, 236, 237, 188; XII, 26.

wind for its activity, its music. In the margin in his copy of Kant's Critique he wrote, 'the mind does not resemble an Aeolian harp ... but rather, as far as objects are concerned, a violin or other instrument of few strings yet vast compass, played on by a musician of genius'.¹⁷

Coleridge, furthermore, rejected the theories of association, according to which the mind is a storehouse, in preference to the analogy of the mind as a plant. His analogy of the plant especially shows Coleridge's acute insight into mental processes. Recently, Ulric Neisser has asserted that the mind does not resemble a storehouse filled with contents which can be 'discovered, classified, and analyzed by systematic introspection'. Besides, Neisser rejects the analogy of the mind to a computer and affirms that 'metaphors of growth and construction are more appropriate for mental processes than the step-by-step sequences of instructions so characteristic of computer modelling'.¹⁸

Coleridge's metaphor of the plant is one of both growth and construction. His keen foresight about mental processes is further revealed in his statements about the ways the mind functions. In his Biographia Literaria, for instance, he remarks that the poet 'brings the whole soul of man into activity' (BL, II, 12); and in his

¹⁷Quoted by John H. Muirhead, Coleridge as Philosopher (London, 1954), pp. 91-2.

¹⁸'Changing Conceptions of Imagery', in The Function and Nature of Imagery, edited by Peter Sheehan (New York, 1972), pp. 233-51 (pp. 236, 237).

criticism of Wordsworth he admits that what mostly impressed him about Wordsworth's poetry was 'the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed' (BL, I, 59). All these statements clearly reveal Coleridge's belief that the mind works in unity. Referring to Coleridge's critical remarks on Wordsworth, quoted above, Clarence Thorpe states that 'union' and 'balance' are the most significant words Coleridge uses in that case; 'And the things that are united and balanced in fine equilibrium are the rational and the sensational with the emotional and imaginative functions of the mind'. Thorpe concludes her article by conjecturing that Coleridge's view of the mind working as one unit would be a view 'approved by modern psychologists'.¹⁹

And indeed that is the case. Ever since the 1960s numerous studies have been devoted to relating the functions of the left and the right hemispheres of the human brain. Experiments conducted by Drs Roger Sperry and Michael Gazzaniga in the 1960s have shown that the right hemisphere can perceive holistically, can comprehend spatial relations, but has no verbal ability. The left hemisphere, on the other hand, has the verbal

¹⁹ 'Coleridge as Aesthetician and Critic', Journal of the History of Ideas, 5, no. 4 (October 1944), 387-414 (p. 414).

ability and explores logical relationships.²⁰

Furthermore, the right hemisphere 'is the sensuous half of the brain, relishing the concrete and here-and-now; it is also the subjective poet finding valid reality in the metaphors and perceiving emotional nuances'. By now it is accepted that the right hemisphere is concerned 'with the more inventive, exploratory and improvisatory aspects of mental activity'.²¹

Yet in his recent book, The Integrated Mind, Michael Gazzaniga, who started the experiments on the human brain with Roger Sperry, concentrates not so much on describing and demonstrating the specialized functions of the left and the right hemispheres, but rather on proving (one of Coleridge's ideas) that the mind works as a unit.

'Intuitively', he remarks, 'it is difficult to accept specialization theory. If the right half-brain processes information in a holistic, synthetic fashion, while the left processes information analytically, where and how is it that these distinct and neurologically incompatible processing modes are integrated in the brain?' The interconnections between the two hemispheres, Gazzaniga believes, show that both hemispheres share analytic and synthetic functions: 'While it is the right hemisphere

²⁰ Roger W. Sperry, 'The Great Cerebral Commissure', Scientific American, 210, no. 1 (January 1964), 42-52; Michael Gazzaniga, 'The Split Brain in Man', Scientific American, 217, no. 2 (August 1967), 24-9.

²¹ Robert McKim, Experiences in Visual Thinking, second edition (Berkeley, 1980), p. 21; Stuart J. Dimond and J. Graham Beaumont, editors, Hemisphere Function in the Human Brain (London, 1974), p. 75.

that is viewed as uniquely specialized for holistic, synthetic processing, the left hemisphere must surely utilize such processing modes in extracting meaning from words, sentences, paragraphs, and the like'. The primary argument in his book is that the two hemispheres 'do not oppose each other but instead work together to maintain the integrity of mental functioning'.²²

Gazzaniga seems to approve of Coleridge's theory that the mind works as a unit, and he further demonstrates that the emotional and the logical, the synthetic and the analytic (or the organic and the mechanical) are not incompatible, but complementary, processes. Besides, the significance of these studies, I believe, lies in the fact that they locate man's creativity, man's imagination, in the right hemisphere of the brain. Imagination, then, can no longer be considered as an ethereal, elusive, mysterious goddess whose existence is accepted only by a few people; it is indeed a function of the human brain. Coleridge's criticism then, was based on his sound insights into the workings of the human brain. As the artist in the creative act relies on both his emotional and later on his logical response, so the recreative critic, Coleridge advocates, should apply his imagination and perception, his emotion and will, his synthetic and analytic powers, in order to be able to judge a work in the same spirit in which the artist has produced it.

²²The Integrated Mind, pp. 47-8, 72.

We have so far seen the soundness of Coleridge's principles of recreative criticism. Modern recreative critics have adopted some of Coleridge's principles and have tried to show how the reader through his imagination and perception can complete that which the artist has intentionally left incomplete--how he, like the artist, can also create. Wolfgang Iser in The Implied Reader sees the literary work from two perspectives, which he calls the 'artistic' and the 'esthetic' poles. Whereas the artistic pole refers to the text created by the author, the aesthetic is 'the realization of the text accomplished by the reader'. In this view, the text itself is never complete, unless a reader is involved. Only 'the convergence of the text and the reader', Iser tells us, 'brings the literary work into existence'. This convergence, Iser explains, 'can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader'. It is this virtuality, he believes, that gives the work a dynamic nature. Reading, in this sense, then, 'causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character'.²³

Iser, then, sees the text in Coleridge's living terms, and endows the reader with the creative power of the artist--that of breathing life into the work. This power, Iser suggests, is actualized in the same way that

²³pp. 274-75.

the artist's creativity takes effect; that is, by the identification of the subject with the object, in this case 'the convergence of text and reader'. Thus Iser, through the aesthetic pole, allots to the reader the role which Arnheim assigns to the viewer of a picture. A picture, Arnheim claims in his book The Power of the Center, is 'a perceptual object and exists only in the consciousness of the viewer. Its properties are aspects of the viewer's percepts'. Arnheim distinguishes between the properties that are in the composition of the picture and those which the viewer contributes to it. One of these distinctions can also apply to the text and the reader: 'The location and strength of the various dynamic centers in a composition', Arnheim states, 'are data generated by the work itself, whereas the focus of attention... depends entirely on the viewer'. Or in reading, we could add, the point of view depends entirely on the reader. The viewer's contribution to the picture, Arnheim explains, is especially evident in the viewer's influence 'upon the depth dimension in pictorial space'. If one touches the picture, one knows it is flat, but through the 'dynamism of the observer's glance', it becomes three-dimensional: 'As the glance strikes the picture perpendicularly, it strives to continue in the same direction and in doing so digs into the depth dimension.... This means that merely looking at a

picture, the viewer gives it more depth than the structure itself contributes'.²⁴

The viewer contributes to a picture the way the reader contributes to a novel or to a poem, because, as Jacob Bronowski in 'The Imaginative Mind in Art' explains, 'you cannot look at a picture and find it beautiful by a merely passive act of seeing. The internal relations that make it beautiful to you have to be discovered and in some way have to be put in by you. The artist provides a skeleton ... but there is no picture and no poem unless you yourself enter it and fill it out'. The reader, according to Bronowski, cannot understand or enjoy the work that the writer or the poet imagined, unless he re-imagines it for himself. Re-imagining means re-creating, which involves 'this personal manipulation of language, this gift of recreating for ourselves, in a fresh way, the images which other people present to us'.²⁵

Like Arnheim and Bronowski, Dewey in his Art and Experience explains the beholder's act of recreation, reminding us of Coleridge's concept that the critic should judge a work in the same spirit in which the artist created it. 'Without an act of recreation', Dewey claims, 'the object is not perceived as a work of art'. 'For to perceive', Dewey believes, 'a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation, must

²⁴p. 37.

²⁵p. 13.

include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced'.²⁶ Thus Dewey seems to divide the work between the artist and the viewer, or his audience, as James did when he was referring to the novel in 1866. 'In every novel', James thought, 'the work is divided between the writer and the reader; but the writer makes the reader very much as he makes his characters. When he makes him ill, that is, makes him indifferent, he does no work; the writer does all. When he makes him well, that is, makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labour' (VR, 18).

The reader's labour, Iser asserts in The Implied Reader, depends on the 'elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text', because without them the reader's imagination would remain passive. While the written part of the literary text gives us the knowledge, the unwritten part gives us 'the opportunity to picture things'. By means of his imagination, the reader synthesizes the information given to him and thus he visualizes the characters or the events of the novel. This is why we resist watching the film of a novel. We can use our powers of imagination to visualize, we can

²⁶p. 54.

have numerous images, a vast number of possibilities for one character, or one event. But 'the moment these possibilities are narrowed down to one complete and immutable picture, the imagination is put out of action, and we feel we have somehow been cheated'. Iser explores this issue even more forcefully in his most recent book, The Act of Reading. In comparing the pictures of a film to the images of a literary work, Iser brings out the mobility and constant shifting of the images and one important difference between perception and imagination. When we imagine Tom Jones, for instance, Iser claims, 'we have to put together various facets that have been revealed to us at different times--in contrast to the film, where we always see him as a whole in every situation'. Unlike perceiving, which requires the presence of the objects, imaging depends upon their absence, 'and brings to life aspects which could not have emerged through direct perception of the objects'. The actual reason for our disappointment with a film version of a novel is not the fact that the film is different from our imaginary version but rather the realization that we have been excluded 'and we resent not being allowed to retain the images which we had produced and which enabled us to be in the presence of our products as if they were real possessions'.²⁷

A clear and thorough explanation of the problem is given in Modern Painters where Ruskin describes an

²⁷p. 283; A Theory of Aesthetic Response (London, 1978), pp. 139, 137, 139.

interesting characteristic of the imagination--its susceptibility to fatigue. The artist, Ruskin suggests, should keep this in mind when composing a picture. A good picture 'need not present too much at once' and 'what it does present may be so chosen and ordered as not only to be more easily seized, but to give the imagination rest, and, as it were, places to lie down and stretch its limbs in; kindly vacancies, beguiling it back into action, with pleasant and cautious sequence of incident'. This is why, Ruskin continues, 'imperfect sketches, engravings, outlines, rude sculptures, and other forms of abstraction, possess a charm which the most finished picture frequently wants. For not only does the finished picture excite the imagination less, but, like nature itself, it taxes it more' (MP, III, 186). Ruskin's point explains the misgivings Henry James had about an illustrated edition of The Golden Bowl, which he discusses at length in his preface to the novel. Besides, his frequent moments of silence in The Portrait of a Lady serve as places of rest and prove his acute awareness of the imagination's vulnerability to fatigue.

Nineteenth and twentieth-century figures then agree that pictures come into conflict with the images formed in the reader's mind; these, no doubt, depend upon the delicate fusion of the artist's with the reader's imagination. But how does the object, in this case the literary text, become part of the subject, in this case the reader? Wolfgang Iser shows how the reader through the image-building process overcomes the distance

between himself and the literary work, because image-building eliminates the subject-object division. Without our active participation in the reading process, an image of an imaginary object cannot exist, and precisely because an image has no existence of its own, and we are essentially 'imagining and producing it, we are actually in its presence and it is ours'.²⁸ The image is, therefore, the key to recreation. In helping images--the offspring of the writer's imagination--come to life, through his own imagination, the reader is gradually making images his own possessions, and he can say and feel and understand James's words on criticism; 'to criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own' (AN, 155).

Undoubtedly this experience involves some kind of surrendering, the kind of receptivity we encountered in Coleridge's definition of the imagination. The surrendering is a loss of consciousness of the self in order to discover the consciousness of the writer, a process attractively expressed in Coleridge's definition of 'suspension of disbelief'. The poet, Coleridge claims, 'does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our eyes open, and with our judgement perdue behind the curtain, ready to awaken us at the first

²⁸The Act of Reading, p. 139.

motion of our will: and meantime, only, not to disbelieve' (BL, II, 189). James seems to have had the same idea in mind when he described in 1897 the effectiveness of a novel as depending upon the reader's involvement. Very often, he believed, novels can soothe the pains of our daily existence, but 'the anodyne is not the particular picture, it is our own act of surrender, and therefore most, for each reader, what he most surrenders to' (NN, 346).

Dewey's explanation of surrendering in his Art as Experience is satisfactory in that it describes the experience as an interaction rather than as a simply passive yielding. In most of our daily experiences, Dewey says, we tend to withdraw rather than to yield, either from fear or from our proccupation with other matters. But his understanding of perception involves 'an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it'. Dewey's description partly explains why Dorothea is unable to enjoy Rome and is overwhelmed by the experience: 'When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down'.²⁹

An aesthetic response, therefore, involves a delicate balance between intimacy and detachment, the sort of state which Wordsworth so succinctly and effectively

²⁹p. 53.

captured in his well-known phrase, 'powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity'. A complete surrender to the object, Coleridge, George Eliot, and Henry James, believe, would entail a complete loss of the self. The artist needs to detach himself from the object in order to understand it, to examine it better. Henry James seems to voice the effects of detachment through Miss Erme in 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1897), when she speaks of the way George found the clue to the story: 'They all worked in him together, and some day somewhere, when he wasn't thinking, they fell in all their superb intricacy into the right combination. The figure in the carpet came out' (p. 251). The figure in the carpet comes out in the same way that James's and Eliot's 'germs' suddenly spring to life. And Miss Erme explains how the inspiration occurred: 'We knew the change would do it-- that the difference of thought, of scene, would give the needed touch, the magic shake.... The elements were all in his mind, and in the secousse of a new and intense experience they just struck light' (p. 252). Obviously the critic does not have to undergo an uncommon experience in order to find the answers he seeks; he does, nevertheless, have to discover the fine balance of involvement and dissociation, of proximity and distance.

The role distance plays is even clearer in our enjoyment of a painting, an issue which Gombrich interestingly explores in his Art and Illusion. What we actually enjoy, when looking at paintings, 'is not so much seeing these works from a distance as the very act

of stepping back, as it were, and watching our imagination come into play, transforming the medley of colour into a finished image'. Gombrich devotes a great part of his book to the 'beholder's share in the reading of the artist's image', and to the role of projection in the creative and aesthetic act. To project the self into the object means for Gombrich, as we have seen, to attribute meanings to the object that do not really exist in it.³⁰

Furhermore, Gombrich believes, projection or imaginative participation is triggered by the incomplete. This is why, he maintains, in his essay 'Meditation on a Hobby Horse or the Roots of Artistic Form', great artists invite us to complete their pictures by leaving them incomplete. Gioconda's changing expressions, for instance, are the result of her indistinct features. Leonardo, so Gombrich says, 'achieved his greatest triumphs of life-like expression by blurring precisely the features in which expression resides, thus compelling us to complete the act of creation'. The same principle of composition, Gombrich remarks, has been used by later artists: 'Rembrandt could dare to leave the eyes of his most moving portraits in the shade because we are thus stimulated to supplement them'.³¹

The reader, beholder, or critic, is, therefore, involved in a creative act when he, by means of his

³⁰pp. 167, 155.

³¹in Aspects of Form, edited by Lancelot Law Whyte (New York, 1968), pp. 209-28 (p. 228).

imagination, is compelled to complete the incomplete. The incomplete, then, appeals to, and stimulates, imagination, memory, and perception. Because Coleridge recognized in the literary image its incomplete nature, he preferred it to actual paintings. The success of the description of Death in Paradise Lost, Book II, Coleridge believed, results from the imagination which 'is called forth, not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind, still offering what is still repelled, and again creating what is again rejected' (SC, II, 138). Milton's description, Coleridge feels, illustrates 'the narrow limit of painting, as compared with the boundless power of poetry: painting cannot go beyond a certain point; poetry rejects all control, all confinement' (SC, II, 139). Even the best attempts at painting Satan and Death meeting at the gates of Hell, Coleridge says, are clumsy and inadequate, reducing Milton's sublime description to 'a skeleton, the driest and hardest image that it is possible to discover; which, instead of keeping the mind in a state of activity, reduces it to the merest passivity' (SC, II, 139).

George Eliot expressed the superiority of language to painting in Chapter 19 in Middlemarch in the exchange between Adolf Naumann and Will Ladislav, when Naumann tells Will that he wants to paint Dorothea into one of his historical canvasses. Will reacts negatively, and, in Coleridgean terms, praises language over painting:

"Your painting and Plastik are poor stuff after all. They perturb dull conceptions instead of raising them.

Language is a finer medium.... This woman whom you have just seen, for example: how would you paint her voice, pray? But her voice is much diviner than anything you have seen of her.... Language gives a fuller image, which is all the better for being vague. After all, the true seeing is within; and painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection" (p. 222).

Nevertheless, literary works and paintings do share affinities; paintings, especially impressionistic ones, may offer us stimulating ideas about the role of the imagination in our interactions with literature. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that through images poets or novelists invite readers to participate as impressionists compel beholders to 'complete' their paintings. E. H. Gombrich's explanation of the role of projection in impressionistic paintings could very well apply to images:

The beholder must mobilize his memory of the visible world and project it into the mosaic of strokes and dabs on the canvas before him. It is here, therefore, that the principle of guided projection reaches its climax. The image, it might be said, has no firm anchorage left on the canvas ... it is only "conjured up" in our minds. The willing beholder responds to the artist's suggestion because he enjoys the transformation that occurs in front of his eyes.... The artist gives the beholder increasingly "more to do", he draws him into the magic circle of creation and allows him to experience something of the thrill of "making" which had once been the privilege of the artist.³²

³²Art and Illusion, p. 169.

Images have neither 'firm anchorage' nor canvas, unless our minds create both. Concerned directly with literary images, Bachelard considers a reader's role in completing images in terms similar to Gombrich's projection into impressionistic paintings. A reader, Bachelard maintains, should attempt to experience images directly--not regard them as 'subordinate means of expresssion'. Bachelard often relates this experience to our ability 'to recapture the naive wonder we used to feel as children', and he connects wonder with a state of 'non-knowing', which he explains, 'is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge'. To be rewarding, knowing should 'be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing' (PS, xxviii, xxix). He attributes this ability to poets, and suggests that readers, in order to enjoy the freshness of images, should cultivate such a quality. Again, here, we think of Coleridge and his 'suspension of disbelief', or his creative passiveness, or his concept of the genius as one who is distinguished by his ability 'to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar' (BL, I, 59).

Both Bachelard and Coleridge, in this case, bring to mind some of George Eliot's remarks in a very early essay written for Herald and Observer in 1847: 'The proper result of intellectual cultivation is to restore the mind to that state of wonder and interest with which it looks on everything in childhood'. Her example of Jean-Jacques

Rousseau could aptly serve Bachelard as an analogy for his phenomenological approach to images: 'thus, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, couched on the grass by the side of a plant, that he might examine the structure and appearance at his ease, would have seemed to a little child so like itself in taste and feeling' (Essays, 19).

The reader's assimilation of images, Bachelard suggests, should be such that they become a part of his memory to the extent that he can say, 'I can no longer know whether I am remembering or imagining ... when I come across them in my reverie' (PR, 2). Bachelard's suggestion here appeals to the fusion of the reader with the text, the subject with the object in a way Henry James beautifully articulated, as we have seen, when reminiscing about his first reading of Madame Bovary in Paris. In The Poetics of Space, Bachelard describes the reader's assimilation of the image in clearly organic terms. The reader 'takes the image just as it is, just as the poet created it, and tries to make it his own, to feed on this rare fruit. He brings the image to the very limit of what he is able to imagine. However far from being a poet he himself may be, he tries to repeat its creation for himself and, if possible, continue its exaggeration' (p. 227, my italics). Bachelard's statements here echo Henry James's idea of criticism as appropriation.

In The Poetics of Space and The Poetics of Reverie, Bachelard abandons his archetypal approach to the image (which he developed in his early works) for what he calls

the phenomenology of the imagination or the phenomenology of the image. Some of the most important aspects of this approach express, I believe, the organic concepts which Coleridge, George Eliot, and Henry James, voiced in their respective theories. The Romantic roots of Bachelard's theory of imagination give coherence to his approach, which otherwise seems incoherent and contradictory. Bachelard's theory has in fact often been related to Coleridge's theory of the imagination.³³ Indeed, Bachelard's sympathetic or organic approach to literature seems to be a direct amplification of Coleridge's recreative criticism. In his later works Bachelard takes pains to distinguish between the psychological and phenomenological approaches. His distinctions are well worth considering, as they refine and bring into focus his own approach, which he does not really define explicitly.

Early in his Poetics of Reverie, Bachelard states the reasons for having given up his archetypal approach in preference to the phenomenological: 'the poetic image sheds light on consciousness in such a way that it is pointless to look for subconscious antecedents of the image. Phenomenology, at least, is set up to consider the poetic image in its own being, distinct and

³³See, for example: Margaret Higonnet, 'Bachelard and the Romantic Imagination,' Comparative Literature, 33, no. 1 (Winter 1981), 18-37; Edward Kaplan, 'Gaston Bachelard's Philosophy of Imagination: an Introduction', Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 33, no. 1 (September 1972), 1-24; L. G. Christophides, 'Bachelard's Aesthetics', Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 20 (1962), 263-71.

independent from any antecedent being as a positive conquest of the world' (p. 3). And at the beginning of The Poetics of Space, he confirms the independence of images: 'the relation of a new poetic image is not.... an echo of the past.... Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own' (p. xii). These are also the reasons for his objections to a psychological or rather to a psychoanalytical approach to images. The psychoanalyst, he claims, 'will abandon the ontological investigation of the image, to dig into the past of man. He sees and points out the poet's sufferings. He explains the flower by the fertilizer'. The phenomenologist, on the other hand, does not feel it is necessary to go so far because 'for him the image is there, the word speaks, the word of the poet speaks to him. There is no need to have lived through the poet's sufferings in order to seize the felicity of speech offered by the poet' (PS, xxvi). Thus Bachelard reminds us of Coleridge's declaration that the rules by which a work is judged should be intrinsic.

Like Coleridge, George Eliot, Henry James, and other recreative critics, Bachelard believes that the reader ought to recapture and experience the emotion the writer felt while composing his work. Such an emotion, as we have seen, Coleridge, Eliot, and James, believed to be expressed though the image, which they also felt displays the germinal quality. Bachelard expresses exactly the same at the opening of his Poetics of Reverie: 'By obliging us to retrace our steps systematically and make

an effort toward clarity of awareness with respect to a poet's given image, the phenomenological method leads us to attempt communication with the creating consciousness of the poet'. And the poetic image 'thus becomes quite simply an absolute origin, an origin of consciousness. In time of great discoveries, a poetic image can be the seed of a world, the seed of a universe imagined out of a poet's reverie' (p. 1, my italics).

At the end of his book The Psychoanalysis of Fire, Bachelard expresses another principal of the recreative criticism; parts which seemed imperfect, or incongruous, when examined closely reveal their integral relationship to the whole: 'There can be no poetic flowering', Bachelard claims, 'without certain synthesis of poetic images'. And he goes on to amplify this point: 'At times some truly diverse images that one had considered to be quite opposed, incongruous, and non-cohesive, will come together and fuse into one charming image'.³⁴

The fusion of several images into one, represents for James also the key to the composition of his fictional works. This point is especially clear in his preface to 'The Altar of the Dead' (1895) and 'Julia Bride' (1908) where he very definitely asserts: 'the imaged resumé of as many the vivifying elements as be coherently packed into an image at once--is the predominant artifice' (AN, 263). And the germ of a given novel is, of course, the 'imaged resumé' of the other

³⁴ translated by Alan C. M. Ross (Boston, 1964), p. 110.

images in that novel, which reveal themselves as the novel unfolds. In fact, James's comments in the preface to The Wings of the Dove seem to express the technique which every one of his novels displays: 'the author's instinct everywhere for the indirect presentation of his main image' (AN, 306). This, in turn, implies some sort of theme and variations pattern, one to which Coleridge perhaps alluded when he attributed to the imagination the 'sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it' and connected this sense to 'the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling' (BL, II, 14). James too effectively attributed to the imagination the gift of 'musical delight' in his essay on Morris's poetry, when he described the 'fictitious universe of the poem' as advancing 'out of its remoteness to surge musically'. He explored the idea of the theme and variations even more suggestively in his preface to What Maisie Knew, where he illustrates his 'treatment by scene' in terms of a concert. Each scene, he says, takes up 'the theme from the other very much as the fiddles, in an orchestra, may take it up from the cornets and flutes, or the wind-instruments take it up from the violins' (AN, 158).

Whether through metaphors of growth, or those of music, Coleridge, Eliot, and James emphasize the dynamism of the imagination. For Bachelard also the dynamic quality of the imagination is one of its most significant characteristics, and this is why he criticizes

psychologists who do not take into consideration the mobility of images when they try to account for their constitution. In every study of the image, Bachelard believes, one has to consider its 'mobility, its fecundity, its life'.³⁵ This is simply because the image loses its life when it becomes static. Gyorgy Kepes explains what Bachelard in this case leaves implied; that is, he tells us why the image needs to remain dynamic. Although Kepes is referring to paintings, his testimony is valuable, I feel, if we are to take the image as real as a perceptual event: 'The limitations of our nervous system define not only the number and extension of the individual optical units which can be perceived as a whole, that is, the space-span, but also the life-span of the visual experience'. One cannot possibly enjoy looking at 'a static relationship long without losing interest any more than one can survive for long in a sealed room where the supply of oxygen is soon exhausted'. Kepes's description of a painting as a 'living organism' can very well apply to the novel and especially to the progression of the germinal image towards 'ever new spatial relationships' until it achieves 'spatial saturation' as well as aesthetic integration:

For the image to remain a living organism, relationships within it must be constantly changing. The eye and the mind must be fed with changing visual relationships. Only this changing variety can provide the

³⁵L'Air et les songes, p. 8.

stimulation necessary for holding attention upon the picture surface. Change implies motion.... The ultimate aim of plastic organization is a structure of movement that dictates the direction and the progression toward ever new spatial relationships until the experience achieves its fullest spatial saturation. As new relationships progressively unfold, the spatial integration of the image gains momentum until it finds final clarification in the plastic image as a whole.³⁶

An image, like a painting, often gains its dynamism from its incompleteness, from inviting the beholder to participate in its making, in its completion. This is the point Gombrich makes when he speaks of the 'beholder's share in the reading of images' and defines it as the beholder's ability 'to collaborate with the artist and to transform a piece of coloured canvas into a likeness of the visible world'.³⁷ In the same way, as I. A. Richards demonstrates in his Coleridge on Imagination, the reader of something like Shakespeare's 'Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky/So glides he in the night from Venus' eye' finds the connections between the different images and 'he seems, in becoming more aware of them, to be discovering not only Shakespeare's meaning, but something which he, the reader, is himself making'. The suggestiveness of the images seems to be the key to the activation of the reader's imagination. Precisely for this reason Bachelard in his La Terre et les rêveries

³⁶Language of Vision (Chicago, 1951), pp. 6, 52.

³⁷Art and Illusion, p. 246.

de la volonté emphasizes: 'There is a big difference between a literary image which describes a beauty that has already been realized, a beauty that has reached its full form, and a literary image that works in the mystery of matter and which wants more to suggest than to describe'.³⁸

Suggestiveness and depth seem synonymous in James's criticism of others. This is why he objects to some of Hawthorne's works where an image is 'in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself'.³⁹

Without any insight, Swinburne's images, he declared in 1875, are offensive to the intelligent reader (VR, 51-59). On the other hand, in his essay on Felix Holt (1866), James highly praised George Eliot for her 'wealth of fancy, of suggestion, of illustration'. Her images, he thought, do not affect the reader only superficially but rather 'sink slowly into your very brain' (NR, 205). For George Eliot an image acquired depth by embodying an idea. Idea and image are inextricably fused in a phrase incisively referring to ideas as 'thoroughly incarnate' (GEL, IV, 300). Her choice of the word 'incarnate' is especially noteworthy, since Wordsworth himself uses it in one of his 'Essays upon Epitaphs' and seems to underline its importance: 'if words be not an incarnation

³⁸Richards, p. 83; Bachelard, p. 8.

³⁹Hawthorne, p. 115.

of the thought, but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove on ill gift'.⁴⁰

In his criticism of Wordsworth's poetry, Coleridge succinctly expresses how the idea and the image are attractively fused. Wordsworth's poetry, he claims, impressed him for 'the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops' (BL, I, 59). Depth and height were ideas congenial to Eliot and James, expressions embodying their concepts of imagination, as we have seen. Coleridge himself saw the imagination as the reconciler of the idea and the image (BL, II, 12); in fact, he regarded a 'reliance on the immediate impressions of the senses' as a 'debility and dimness of the imaginative power' (BL, I, 19), and shunned 'the despotism of the eye'. In his observations in his notebooks and in his poetry, we can see how he moves from sight to thought, from perception to meditation, from the image to the idea. In an entry in his Notebooks in 1804 he lyrically observes:

O that Sky, that soft blue mighty
Arch, resting on the mountains or
solid Sea-like plain/what an awful
adorable onmeity in unity.... To the
eye it is an inverted Goblet, the
inside of a sapphire Bason;= perfect

⁴⁰Prose Works, edited by A. B. Grossart, 3 vols (London, 1879), II, 55.

beauty in shape and color; to the
mind [it is] immensity.⁴¹

The shift from the external to the internal brings to mind Dorothea's remarks when she sees the emerald ring at the beginning of *Middlemarch*: '"How beautiful these gems are! It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven"' (p. 35). The search of the imagination from the fragments to the whole, from the particular to the universal, from the external to the internal, exhibits its dynamism and reveals how intimately related is the image to the idea.

The germs of George Eliot's and Henry James's novels, as we have seen, very often originated in an image. Yet James at times seems to trace the origin of a story to an idea rather than to an image. Referring to his inspiration for *The American*, for instance, James claims, 'it was important for the effect of my friend's discomfiture that it should take place on a high and lighted stage... It was all charmingly simple, this conception, and the current must have gushed, full and clear to my imagination, from the moment Christopher Newman rose before me, on a perfect day of the divine Paris, in the great gilded Salon Carré of the Louvre'. Thus, in this case, the image confirms the conception (the idea) and gives it clarity and completeness. Once

⁴¹Quoted by Kathleen Coburn in *The Self Conscious Imagination: a Study of the Coleridge Notebooks* (London, 1974), pp. 58-9.

the image appears, any doubts about the conception dissolve: 'I have, I confess, no memory of a disturbing doubt; once the man himself was imaged to me (and that germination is a process almost always untraceable) he [Christopher Newman] must have walked into the situation as by having a pass-key from his pocket' (AN, 23-24). In his Notebooks, he often begins with an idea and waits for an image to give it substance, as is the case, for instance, with The Other House (1896): 'The thing can only be, like the Private Life, impressionistic.... Stated, pen in hand, the whole conchetto strikes me as thinner and less picturesque than when it first occurred to me. I must think it over a little more and perhaps something more in the nature of an image--as in the Portrait of a Lady--will come out to me'.⁴²

Quite frequently, it is difficult to distinguish an idea from an image, as modern artists and critics confirm. Yeats concerned with this problem gives us a helpful insight: 'It is not possible to separate an emotion or a spiritual state from the image that calls it up and gives it expression'; Suzanne Langer believes that 'ideas are undoubtedly made out of sense impressions--out of messages from the special organs of perception, and vague visceral reports of feeling'; Sir Herbert Read connects the idea to the image in his study The Forms of Things Unknown: 'idea is an offspring of the marriage of hitherto unrelated images. Newton had to see the apple

⁴²p. 144.

fall before he could "hit upon" (as we say) the theory of gravity'.⁴³ This is the point Bronowski also makes in 'The Imaginative Mind in Science', when he refers to ideas in science. Contrary to what most people think, Bronowski claims, even scientific ideas are not abstract concepts because 'the human mind works with images, and even its most subtle ideas have to be composed from images'.⁴⁴ Einstein illustrates well how images are often the bedrock of even highly abstract ideas. In a letter to Jacques Hadamard, he described the role images played in his thinking:

The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be "voluntarily" reproduced and combined.... The above mentioned elements are, in my case, of visual and some of muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will.⁴⁵

The interrelationship of images and ideas warrants James Baker's assertion that 'images are not pillars

⁴³Quoted by Graham Hough in The Last Romantics (London, 1949), p. 228; Philosophy in a New Key (New York, 1948), p. 42); (New York, 1960), p. 99.

⁴⁴in Imagination and the University, pp. 3-38 (p. 33).

⁴⁵Quoted by Jacques Hadamard in Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field (London, 1945), pp. 142-43.

supporting vacancy, but caryatids sustaining weight'.⁴⁶

Indeed, an image often captures both the external and the internal, the visible and the invisible, in the brilliant way Gombrich describes it in the conclusion of his Art and Illusion: 'the true miracle of the language of art is not that it enables the artist to create the illusion of reality. It is that under the hands of a great master the image becomes translucent. In teaching us to see the visible world afresh, he gives us the illusion of looking into the invisible realms of the mind--if only we know, as Philostratus says, how to use our eyes'.⁴⁷ This is exactly the case with the great masters, George Eliot and Henry James, who repeatedly assure us that their goal is to train our sense of wonder at familiar objects, to show us that surface is insignificant without depth, that the external cannot sustain itself without the internal, and that sight is meaningless without insight. Both James and Eliot would agree that they aimed at painting 'translucent images', and this partly explains their fascination with images of windows or doors which capture so effectively surface and depth.

Is an image, then, a picture? In a recent study, Stephen Kosslyn, a psychologist, categorically asserts that images are not pictures, that it 'is erroneous to equate image representations with mental photographs, since this would overlook the fact that images are

⁴⁶The Sacred River, p. 195.

⁴⁷p. 329.

composed from highly processed perceptual encodings.... It is certainly true that a literal "picture-in-the-head" notion is incorrect'.⁴⁸ Yet Coleridge's and James's testimonies prove the opposite, thus supporting Bachelard in his attack against the psychologists's treatment of the image. In his account of the genesis of 'Kubla Khan' in 1798, Coleridge affirms that he was in a semiconscious state during which 'all the images rose up before him as things'; and in a letter to Godwin in 1801 he wrote, 'I bent down to pick something from the ground ... as I bent my head there came a distinct, vivid spectrum upon my eyes; it was one little picture--a rock, with birches and ferns on it, a cottage backed by it, and a small stream. Were I a painter, I would give an outward existence to this, but it will always live in my memory'.⁴⁹

James's major and minor works abound in pictures. His masterpiece, The Portrait of a Lady, as we shall see, beautifully proves that image is indeed picture. One short story can serve as a good example here. Granger in 'Flickerbridge' (1902), we are told, is involved in a situation 'he would scarce have known how to describe-- could doubtless have described best with a full, clean brush, supplemented by a play of gesture; for it was always his habit to see an occasion, of whatever kind, primarily as a picture, so that he might get it ... so that he might keep it, well together'. Susanne Kappeler,

⁴⁸Image and Mind (London, 1980), p. 19.

⁴⁹Quoted by Lowes in The Road to Xanadu, pp. 356, 66.

in her recent book on Henry James, notes that the picture is possible through a projection of the imagination. Granger's experience, that is, is not a passive perceptual act, but an imaginative one that forms the picture and 'keeps it together'.⁵⁰

If we consider the etymological root of the word imagining, imago, we can see how the word itself originally referred to a carved or to a 'sculptured' likeness. Coleridge, James, and Eliot, I believe, would all agree with this definition of image, as being three dimensional, since they all described images as pictures. James, in particular, seems to be referring to sculpturing, the original sense of the word, in one of his comments on Alphonse Daudet in 1883. Nature, James remarks, has endowed Daudet with 'a light, quick, joyous, yet reflective, imagination, a faculty of seeing images, making images ... of conceiving everything in the visible form, in the plastic spirit' (PP, 205). It is this 'conceiving in the plastic spirit' that Roderick Hudson seems to be seeking when he impatiently exclaims: '"I haven't a blamed idea. I think of subjects, but they remain mere idiotic names. They're mere words--they're not images' (p. 149). The emphasis here seems to be on the three-dimensional nature of images. Images can be sculptures and they can be pictures; but in the literary world they do not stand apart as Roderick Hudson sees them; in fact, images cannot be painted or sculptured

⁵⁰ Collected Tales, XI, 334; Writing and Reading in Henry James (New York, 1980), p. 106.

without words. And since imagining often means seeing something familiar in a new light, an image is often the product of an original linguistic context. This is why Bachelard claims that 'every new literary image is an original text of language' and very often he believes that the literary image is 'the liaison of the metaphor and the image'. Yet he insists that you do not have to be a linguist in order to be able to enjoy the beauty of the image.⁵¹

Although Bachelard does not precisely define either metaphor or image in his works, he frequently attempts to distinguish between the two, and he, more satisfactorily than other philosophers, I feel, succeeds in illustrating the flights of the image beyond its linguistic boundaries. The poetic image, he says in his introduction to The Poetics of Space, 'is often mistaken for metaphor'; this is why, he explains, he has deliberately included in his books images which are 'not mere metaphors' (pp. xxx, xxxv). Bachelard's distinction between images and metaphors becomes relatively clear when he refers to Bergson's writings, which he feels are full of metaphors but contain hardly any images: 'Now a metaphor gives concrete substance to an impression that is difficult to express. Metaphor is related to a psychic being from which it differs. An image, on the contrary, product of absolute imagination, owes its entire being to the imagination' (PS, 75).

⁵¹La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté, p. 6; L'air et les songes, p. 206.

The usefulness of metaphors in dealing with experiences not named by common language, and particularly in describing nuances of emotion, is Winifred Nowottny's concern in her book The Language Poets Use. The world of private emotion, she emphasizes, 'is in particular need of metaphor because the vocabulary of emotion is comparatively little developed--no doubt because emotions cannot be pointed to and identified as one can point to and identify shades of colour'. In poetry very often, Nowottny demonstrates, complexity of emotion is embodied by involved syntax.⁵² But this is also true in fiction, one would argue, and is especially obvious in Henry James's late novels in which the focus is not so much on physical or external adventures (as in his earlier novels) as on internal or emotional events.

To see something in terms of something else certainly involves our imagination. As the linguistic context changes, our perspective shifts, and as we are compelled to see things from new perspectives, we enrich our reading with constant recreations. In this respect, metaphor, like imagination, provides us with channels to creativity and discovery. A novelist often guides us (through metaphors) to see the world from different viewpoints; or, as Janet Gezari indicates, referring to Middlemarch, metaphors compel us 'to see many things in terms of other things and to see as well the shared qualities that make translations into new terms

⁵² (London, 1962), pp. 60-2.

possible.... They may even startle us into the larger analogical vision which is, in all the novels, the vision of awakened consciousness'.⁵³

What does emerge from Eliot's and James's critical and fictional works is an emphasis on the visual rather than on the linguistic. Like Coleridge, both novelists felt that the writer's primary goal was to make the reader feel as the writer felt when he was composing his work, and feeling, they all believed, cannot be detached from seeing. The emphasis on the visual rather than on the linguistic is crystallized in Eliot's primary objection to Kathie Brande in 1857; referring to the scenic passages in this book Eliot claimed the author 'writes about them, does not paint them'. A good writer, Eliot emphasized, would have 'suffered his imagination to dwell on such scenes until, aided by his knowledge, either direct or indirect, the principal details became so vividly present to him that he could describe as if he saw them, and we should read as if we saw them too'.⁵⁴ Similarly, yet more forcefully and more lyrically, in a review of Alphonse Daudet's works in 1883, James shows that the reader can see only when the writer himself has felt and seen. In James's view Daudet's style 'never rests, never is satisfied, never leaves the idea sitting half-draped ... it is always ... trying to add a little more, to produce the effect which shall make the reader

⁵³ 'The Metaphorical Imagination of George Eliot', ELH, 45, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 93-106 (p. 104).

⁵⁴ Westminster Review, 67, (p. 321).

see with his eyes, or rather with the marvellous eyes of Alphonse Daudet' (PP, 232).

Coleridge, Eliot, and James, all indeed repeatedly demonstrate that a reader does not have to be a linguist in order to be able to enjoy images. Analyzing Shakespeare's lines, 'full many a glorious morning have I seen/Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye', from Sonnet XXXIII, Coleridge remarks that many have seen sunrise without a poetic sensation, but could not help but experience the beauty of this passage because,

you see not only the sun rising over the mountains, but you have also the moral feeling with which the rapidity of the poet's mind has connected it. You behold the sun the sovereign of the world, the elation of the high mountain flattered by a glance of his beams, and the activity of the poet's mind which, in one image, has merged so many associations. You feel him to be a poet, inasmuch as, for a time, he has made you one--an active creative being (SC, II, 93-94)

Coleridge's, Eliot's, and James's paths converge once again. Our enjoyment, they declare, depends directly on our ability to see images, to feel, and, consequently, to understand. Only by undergoing these experiences, can we hope to become 'active, creative beings'.

CHAPTER 4

THE REFINEMENT OF THE IMAGINATION

'Prelude', the single word that introduces us to a reading of Middlemarch, undoubtedly has the effect of music: it brings to mind a brief movement before a musical composition and certainly suggests an introduction to an opera or an oratorio. Simultaneously, one cannot help thinking of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, The Prelude (1850), a journey inward that traces the origin and growth of his poetic powers and leads to self discoveries, or revelations, which are often brought about through the mind's vital interaction with the external world. Middlemarch indeed resembles a musical composition and a journey. Allusions to music extend from major characters like Dorothea, whom Will very early associates with an Aeolian harp, to Rosamond, who has 'the effect of exquisite music' (121) on Lydgate, and even to minor characters like Garth, who thinks of Messiah when he hears Dorothea's voice.

At the opening of the book, however, before we are introduced to any of the characters, 'Prelude' brings to mind the only essay George Eliot ever wrote on music,

'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar'. An opera, she asserted in this essay, as we have seen, should not be 'a mosaic, of melodies stuck together', but an 'organic whole, which grows like a palm, its earliest portion containing the germ and prevision of all the rest'. In Wagner's operas, she emphasized, 'there is a gradual unfolding and elaboration of that fundamental contrast of emotions, that collision of forces, which is the germ of the tragedy; just as the leaf of the plant is successively elaborated into branching stem and compact bud and radiant corolla' (Essays, 102,104). Her comments locate the germ of a composition at its beginning and identify it with collision.

Certainly the 'Prelude' maps out the fundamental collision to be unfolded in Middlemarch.¹ This collision is expressed in spatial as well as metaphorical terms. The little girl walking out hand-in-hand with her brother is brought back home--indoors. Theresa's nature is dissatisfied with the milieu she lives in, simply because her passionate nature finds her social life inadequate, devoid of opportunities for noble deeds and ideal ambitions. Since she cannot find externally what she yearns for, she turns inward to weave ideals which the external world will not furnish: 'her flame quickly burned up that light fuel; and, fed from within, soared

¹Eliot's use of the 'Prelude' is almost identical to Coleridge's. Referring to Romeo and Juliet, Coleridge remarks: 'with his accustomed judgement Shakespeare has begun by placing before us a lively picture of all the impulses of the play, like a prelude (SC, I, 6).

after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self' (25). The shift from the external to the internal seems to mark here the origin of modern speculation which, as we have seen, prefers the subjective to the objective. Dorothea often turns inward relying on her 'self intuition to restore order to a world which had ceased to afford ready-made images of order'.² For the later-born Theresas the conflict between the internal (thought) and the external ('deed') is continued, and to 'common eyes' their struggles are often regarded as mere 'inconsistency' or 'extravagance'. Collision of the self with society, the kind George Eliot also described in her essay on Antigone, provides the concluding tone of the 'Prelude'. Internal and external come into conflict when a modern Saint Theresa finds herself 'foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispered among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed' (26). Here, expressed very clearly, we have the germ of Dorothea's, Lydgate's, and Casaubon's characters, since all of them yearn to change the world but find themselves either defeated or frustrated by external, often petty obstacles. Even minor characters are connected to the 'Prelude' by means of allusions to martyrdom. Yet this germ is only an idea

²Orsini, Organic Unity in Ancient and Later Poetics, p. 84; Foakes, p. 45.

at this stage, a theme which will be played by each character in a different variation. But the effect of the visual imagination is incomparably superior to that of the auditory. And the idea is incarnate only when we can look at it, only when it is transformed into an image; then we can see, how each image takes up, to use Henry James's words, 'the theme from the other very much as the fiddles, in an orchestra, may take it up from the cornets or flutes, or the wind-instruments take it up from the violins' (AN, 158).

In Book I we see the transformation of the idea into the image in the first dramatic presentation of Dorothea. After describing Dorothea's paradoxical nature, a blend of puritanical notions with pagan accents, the narrator focuses on the two sisters, painting their portraits by a series of contrasts. Celia is eager to see their mother's jewels, which Dorothea has kept for six months and has very likely forgotten. After opening the jewelry case, Dorothea fastens a necklace of purple amethysts round Celia's neck and refuses to take for herself the cross, declaring self-righteously, and in a very puritanical fashion, '"a cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket"' (35). One supposes that Celia will have all the jewels, graciously allowing Dorothea to indulge in her puritanical renunciation. But when Dorothea opens the ring-boxes, she is dazzled by a ring which is set with a fine emerald and diamonds; the lustre of the stones is brought forth suddenly by a sunray 'passing beyond a cloud', slipping through the window:

"How very beautiful these gems are!" said Dorothea, under a new current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam. "It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven. I think that emerald is more beautiful than any of them" (35).

In a few smooth and graceful strokes this image instantly captures long theories of perception and imagination.

Dorothea's emotional response shows that perception indeed is initially subjective and her lavish remarks reveal that synesthetic perception is most often the case. At once the senses intercommunicate in Dorothea's exclamation, "'it is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like a scent'". Furthermore, the staccato-like effect of Dorothea's sentences makes us aware of the powerful feeling the jewels arouse in her and simultaneously of the way they affect her imagination. Besides, here the 'new current of feeling' shows how images 'are modified by a predominant passion; or, by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion' (BL, II, 16).

The image of the emerald and diamond ring finely embodies the idea of the 'Prelude', the collision between the self and the others, the internal with the external world. Without the window, and sunbeam that slips through it onto the table, the brilliance and fire of the diamonds would not affect Dorothea. Like a fine painter, the author, is acutely aware of the fact that the way we see things depends on how the light strikes them. It is

no accident that the source of light is outside. This beam is the most important thing in the picture. If we were to take it away all the magic would disappear with it. Light is a force here that raises the importance of the scene and highlights the interplay between the external and the internal on which both perception and imagination depend. The fine spatial interplay of the gleam from outdoors with the jewels indoors is simultaneously juxtaposed with the primary conflict in Dorothea's character (the sensuous justified by the spiritual), as she tries 'to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy' (36).

The polarity between outward and inward acquires another dimension, as Dorothea's thought moves from the brilliance of the diamonds to the 'miserable men', who find them and sell them. Thus she directs our thinking below the surface, into the mines where diamonds are found, into the darkness where the precious stones are dirty and unpolished, lacking any lustre. Her imagination, no doubt, is of the penetrative kind which Ruskin described in Modern Painters. Specifically, the movement from surface to depth, from sight to insight echoes Ruskin's definition of the virtue of the imagination which 'is in its reaching, by intuition and intensity of gaze .. a more essential truth than is seen at the surface of things' (MP, II, 201).

Her allusion to St. John's Revelation also emphasizes a private imaginative experience--a series of

personal revelations which she, as well as the other characters, will undergo, if only they are receptive enough and willing to contradict Mrs Farebrother's declaration, "I am not likely to follow new lights, though there are plenty of them here as elsewhere" (200), or can understand the flaw in Mrs Plymdale's thinking, "I see very little good in people aiming out of their own sphere" (703).

The germinal image then of the novel is beautifully controlled, guiding our minds in definite directions. It is an image of sight, an emerald (whose colour was believed to be good for eyesight) surrounded by diamonds. By no stretch of the imagination can we see how the facets of a diamond are all arranged more or less concentrically, and how the interconnected planes of a diamond resemble the interlaced filaments of a web, the other dominant image in Middlemarch. Indeed the fire and translucency of the diamonds point backwards and forward: back to the flame of the 'Prelude' and the reflection of the water of the pond, and ahead to its future transformations--into images of water, mirror, fire, light--and its opposite dark or subterranean images. The germinal image is in the centre from which the rest of the images grow; furthermore, it is part of Dorothea, the central character, and it embodies oppositions--it has all the elements which Coleridge attributed to the germs of Shakespeare's plays. Because Dorothea is the only character who embodies the two opposed directions that the novel follows and integrates, she alone is the

aesthetic centre of the novel. The rest of the characters adopt either an external viewpoint, disregarding the internal perspective, or remain preoccupied with the world within, heedless of the world without.

Middlemarch is a splendid gallery of various portraits, each painted in contrast to another. Underlying the apparent contrasts, however, remain details which all of the portraits share, thus giving us the impression that each portrait has been the germ or the inspiration for the next. All characters seem to evolve from Dorothea's nature, displaying to a greater or a lesser degree some of her qualities. As in Wordsworth's Prelude, so in Middlemarch imagination seems to be the primary protagonist. Through each character, the author explores and offers popular notions of the imagination and contrasts these to the creative power which transforms one's view of the self and the others, enabling one to move away from the blindness of one's egotism, to a lucid perception of the self and a sympathetic view of others.

Instead of following Dorothea's path, from the very beginning, I propose to pursue a more circuitous route, the other characters' courses, in order to show how their tracks converge with Dorothea's path. Through such an approach, I believe, one can better see how Middlemarch displays Coleridge's law of bicentrality.

Not only is Dorothea contrasted with Celia but with Casaubon also--glaringly so. She is young, blooming, and

ardent; he is old, withered, and coldly indifferent. Dorothea's early description of Casaubon's words as specimens from a mine, or 'the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages' (55) become the germ of his character. Simultaneously, the image of the mine reveals the cyclical motion of the novel, a movement which stimulates connections in the reader's mind and keeps the novel vital and dynamic. 'Mine' refers both to Dorothea's earlier allusion to the men who find precious stones and work on them, and to Casaubon's dark character and his future dim understandings. Casaubon's seemingly humble presentation of his own character at the first dinner in Chapter II is similar to Dorothea's impression, but with one difference--there is no door that might open: '"I feed too much on the inward sources; I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes. But I find it necessary to use the utmost caution about my eyesight"' (40). Yet this description identifies, and in many ways explains, Dorothea's attraction to Casaubon before she takes the time to justify to herself the reasons for marrying him. Casaubon's 'inward sources' make us think of the flame 'fed from within'. But the allusion to the 'Prelude' is ironic, since, as we later see, Casaubon is so fettered by egotism, that he cannot possibly reach a 'rapturous consciousness of life beyond self' (25). Like Dorothea,

he is trying to find order; like her, he has poor eyesight: but his short-sightedness is both literal and metaphorical. His inability to see the futility of his work, based on premises illusory and false, reveals his perceptual and imaginative blindness early in the novel: 'having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences' (46).

The reflected light suggests dim illumination; certainly, his portrait is painted with very little light in it. The brightest light is that of a taper, which Casaubon carries among the tombs of the past which he is trying to reconstruct. Otherwise, even his smile does not brighten his face, since it is like 'pale, wintry sunshine' (48). The lack of any lights about him becomes even more noticeable when he is identified with his house. Lowick Manor is depicted on a grey November morning, without any sunshine, having 'an air of autumnal decline, and Mr Casaubon, when he presented himself, had no bloom that could be thrown into relief by that background' (99). Melancholy or dismalness is the primary mood controlling the picture of Lowick Manor, 'the sort of house that must have children, many flowers, open windows ... to make it seem a joyous home' (98-99). But Casaubon's portrait, like his home at this point, is drawn without windows, simply because, most often, Mr Casaubon 'with his taper stuck before him ... forgot the absence of windows, and ... had become indifferent to the

sunlight' (230). Absence of light is associated with lack of feeling and lack of imagination: 'It is an uneasy lot at best ... to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self--never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously tranformed into the vividness of thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired ... scrupulous and dim-sighted' (314). Replete with allusions to the 'Prelude' this description contrasts Casaubon with Dorothea, who displays all the positive qualities he lacks. Like Coleridge and Ruskin, Eliot here emphasizes that feeling is the primary quality of the imagination. In this case especially she seems to express Ruskin's belief that 'imagination is based upon, and appeals to, a deep heart feeling' (MP, II, 298).

The last time we see Casaubon we are intensely conscious of his approaching death as he walks alone under the dark, sombre yew trees in the sunset. The shadows and darkness outweigh the little light, making his black figure indistinct. Yet his suffering does not lead to a revelation, a new awareness of the self or others, but forces him to withdrawal and alienation, which is made even sharper by his rigidity when Dorothea attempts to approach him and soothe him. Although he considers himself a devout Christian, he cannot be comforted by the belief in a future life, simply because his imagination, hampered as it is by the present, it is

not powerful enough to see the distant and the imperceptible: 'Mr Casaubon's immediate desire was not for divine communion and light divested of earthly conditions; his passionate longings, poor man, clung low and mist-like in very shady places' (462). His last effort to 'keep his cold grasp on Dorothea's life' (535) by extracting a promise from her to abide by his wishes after his death, allies Casaubon's imagination with Featherstone's: 'in chuckling over the vexations he could inflict by the rigid clutch of his dead hand, he inevitably mingled his consciousness with that livid stagnant presence, and so far as he was preoccupied with a future life, it was with one of gratification inside his coffin' (358).

There is, then, no progress in Casaubon's spiritual life. His 'last moment of dim earthly discerning' is like the first; there are no revelations in his life, no epiphanies that would lead to self-knowledge. His imagination cannot improve or develop because it is stunned by suspicion. Since he lacks imagination, Casaubon cannot see the future, does not live with his past as a guide to his present. Unable to feel intensely, he sees dimly and understands obtusely.

Next to Casaubon's dark portrait, Will's picture, radiating light, is a beautiful contrast. Since the germ embodies contrasts, it is natural that the novel should grow through opposition. The contrast between Casaubon and Will (or Dorothea and Rosamond and so on) simultaneously reveals Eliot's tendency to follow the

principle of Natural Idealism in the presentation and development of her characters. By means of this technique Eliot, like the naturalist painter Ruskin describes, is able to 'associate inferior forms, so as not only to set off those which are most beautiful, but to bring out clearly what good there is in the inferior forms themselves' (MP, III, 112). Casaubon's dim figure certainly sets off Will's brightness. Will is a diamond properly cleaned, cut, and polished, a diamond whose extraordinary brilliance does not in any way remind us of the dark earth where it was formed: 'The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness.... When he turned his head quickly his hair seemed to shake out light and some persons thought they saw decided genius in this coruscation' (241). His smile, unlike Casaubon's 'wintry' smile, 'was a gush of inward light illuminating the transparent skin as well as the eyes, and playing about every curve and line as if some Ariel were touching them with a new charm, and banishing for ever the traces of moodiness' (237-38). This description beautifully delineates the external-internal interplay in Will's personality.

Unlike Casaubon, who is mostly identified with the indoors, or rather the subterranean, Will is associated with the outdoors. On his way to Lowick church to see Dorothea on a bright Spring morning, Will 'looked like an incarnation of the spring whose spirit filled the air' (512). And after his conversation with Dorothea in Chapter XXXVII, Will hurriedly leaves, when the rain

stops, saying "'I would rather walk the five mile. I shall strike across Halsell Common, and see the gleams on the wet grass. I like that"' (403). In fact, he seems to dread the indoors or to see it as confining. When Dorothea suggests that perhaps his vocation is to be a painter, he responds: "'I should not like to get into their [artists'] way of looking at the world entirely from the studio point of view"' (239). The interplay of external with internal is apparent even in Will's private musings. Will's greatest dread, for instance, is that of becoming 'dimmed and for ever ray-shorn' (403) in Dorothea's eyes. And when he thinks of his relationship to Dorothea, which is threatened after she sees him with Rosamond, he regrets that, 'until that wretched yesterday ... all their vision, all their thought of each other, had been as in a world apart, where the sunshine fell on tall white lilies.... But now--would Dorothea meet him in that world again?' (862).

Unlike Casaubon, who is constricted in the narrow space of vaults, Will seems unburdened and free, "'calling himself Pegasus and every form of prescribed work 'harness'" (107). Against Casaubon's close-mindedness and rigidity, Will's mind stands out receptive and pliant, showing qualities which Dorothea discovers in him very early. In Rome, for instance, when Casaubon finds Dorothea with Will, she is not so worried about her husband's anger because Will is there. By then his presence represents 'a source of greater freedom ... his young equality was agreeable, and also perhaps his

openness to conviction. She felt an immense need of some one to speak to, and she had never before seen any one who seemed so quick and pliable, so likely to understand everything' (242). And plasticity, of course means an ability to be formed, to be shaped, to be changed--all qualities associated with growth. Yet Will's portrait is not painted in altogether positive tones. We see the flaws in Will's openness and unwillingness to choose a profession, since his genius is 'intolerant of fetters', waiting for 'those messages from the universe which summon it to its peculiar work, only placing itself in an attitude of receptivity towards all sublime chances'. Will's extreme methods of attaining receptivity, including wine and opium, are all ironically described (109).

Nevertheless, Will's nature is definitely identified with Dorothea's very early in the novel. When Dorothea first sees him in the Lowick grounds, after seeing Casaubon's house, she notices his grey eyes, which are close together, his 'delicate irregular nose with a little ripple in it' and his hair that is 'falling backward (104); all these are features which she had noticed a little earlier in aunt Julia's miniature. In Will's absence, aunt Julia often seems to replace Will, as Dorothea identifies with her at times of loneliness, sadness, or intense introspection. In Rome, Dorothea's beautiful figure against the reclining Ariadne is also identified with Will's. Before we see Dorothea, we see Will, who had his back turned on the Belvedere Torso in

the Vatican, 'looking out on the magnificent view of the mountains' (219); in fact, he is so absorbed that he does not notice Naumann approaching him. Naumann takes him to see Dorothea, who is unaware of Ariadne (as Will was of the Torso), looking on something from outdoors, 'her large eyes ... fixed dreamily on a streak of sunlight which fell across the floor' (220).

Indeed Will is the only one who sees and understands Dorothea's nature, the one who initiates her movement outward and gently steers her away from her puritanical tendency to renounce any kind of joy. His first impression of her is full of opposites, representing his own passionate personality. Influenced by his dislike of Casaubon, he assumes that Dorothea must be an 'unpleasant girl', since she is about to marry Casaubon, and when she refuses to judge his sketch, he interprets her hesitation as a covert negative judgement. Yet his negative impression is swayed by his extreme attraction to her beautiful voice: 'it was like the voice of a soul that had once lived in an Aeolian harp' (105). His image of the Aeolian harp is the germ of Will's insight into Dorothea's nature, but it also becomes the germ from which his own personality unfolds; furthermore, the Aeolian harp is consistent with the initial germ in displaying the inward-outward dialectic.

This is why Will objects to Naumann's wish to paint Dorothea's portrait. Painting, in Will's view, does not accurately express the external-internal interplay and neglects the internal in favor of the external.

Naumann's painting, Will passionately declares, cannot possibly do justice to her voice. Language is a better medium, since it gives '"a fuller image which is all the better for being vague. After all, the true seeing is within; and painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection"' (222). Will's rhapsody here, as we have seen, echoes Coleridge's comments on Paradise Lost, which praise Milton's (the poet's) painting of Satan, over any painter's for its complexity and indefiniteness and, therefore, its greatest appeal to our imaginations. Will's assertion that true seeing takes place within also brings to mind Coleridge's belief that The Tempest should not be extravagantly staged, appealing to the external senses at the expense of the internal seeing, for 'the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within,--from the moved and sympathetic imagination' (SC, I, 132)

Later on, Will's definition of the poet is also full of Coleridgean overtones, especially in identifying the imagination with feeling, and in acknowledging feeling as the key to knowledge: 'to be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern, that no shade of quality escapes it ... a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge' (265). Will's definition applies to both Dorothea and himself: to Dorothea, who sees by means of her spiritual revelations how 'feeling passes into knowledge', and to Will, who 'was of a temperament to

feel keenly the presence of subtleties: a man of clumsier perceptions would not have felt, as he did' (473).

Yet Will is the victim of insensitivity in some of his encounters with Dorothea. In Rome, for instance, when she talks about Casaubon's industriousness, he yields without second thought to his impulse to tell her of the German progress in the field Casaubon is working, and he is 'unable to imagine the mode in which Dorothea would be wounded' (240). But Dorothea's silence checks his thoughtlessness, and he feels that he has offended her. Similarly, his confrontation with Rosamond reveals Will's lack of imagination. His attack against her, after Dorothea sees him with Rosamond, is certainly unjustified, since he is as guilty as Rosamond. But Will's blindness to Rosamond's pain echoes Dorothea's imperceptiveness to Casaubon's trouble during their first argument in Rome. Preoccupied with his own suffering, Will does not feel Rosamond's and even 'when his eyes fell on Rosamond's blighted face it seemed to him that he was the more pitiable of the two; for pain must enter into its glorified life of memory before it can turn into compassion (837). Gradually, Will does come to the realization that Rosamond had depended on him for her happiness, that his outburst had created an obligation for him (841), that he cannot suddenly cut off his relationship with Lydgate and Rosamond (861). But his imperceptiveness to Rosamond's words, is counteracted by his sensitivity to Lydgate's misfortune, demonstrated especially by his reluctance to let Lydgate know that he

himself had rejected Bulstrode's money, when Lydgate has been destroyed by accepting it (840).

Will then is capable of projecting the self into the other, and his encounters with others do illustrate experiences of the sympathetic imagination. In Rome we also witness the synthetic, holistic power of Will's imagination. His enthusiastic response to the artistic panorama of Rome is vividly contrasted to Casaubon's indifference and Dorothea's bewilderment. To Will, 'the very miscellaneousness of Rome ... made the mind flexible with constant comparison, and saved you from seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connection'. Rome, Will tells Dorothea and Casaubon during their dinner together there, 'had given him quite a new sense of history as a whole: the fragments stimulated his imagination and made him constructive' (244). It is no wonder that Will, who has had a strong background in art, is able to comprehend the 'stupendous fragmentariness' which oppresses Dorothea, who has solely 'fed on meagre Protestant histories and art chiefly of the hand-screen sort' (224, 225). Will must be one of 'those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts' (225). Knowledge and imagination are not independent, but interdependent, as in Will's case.

Our final view of Will cannot be possibly dissociated from our picture of Dorothea, as they are

both illuminated by the light of the lightning outside, coming through the projecting window in the background. The final scene of the two of them together makes the synthesis of the opposites, within and without, more vivid. Will, though, unlike Dorothea, does not experience the inner-outer interplay as a collision, which he tries to reconcile; does not seek or experience an integration of the external with the internal. And though he does suffer for Dorothea, his sympathetic imagination does not encompass people who have injured him. Furthermore, his imagination lacks a cyclical movement which would enable him to use his past experiences as the guide for his present or future actions. His insensitivity to Rosamond, following his past lack of insight into Dorothea's nature, illustrates the lack of a cyclical imagination.

Lydgate's life highlights what Will's imagination lacks, and gives prominence to Dorothea's generous and ardent nature. At the same time, Lydgate's path reveals that imagination is not always an innate force but rather a power which becomes more and more refined through man's perceptual and emotional experiences. Unlike either Will or Dorothea, who seek the path to their life's fulfilment, Lydgate has no difficulty finding it. Early in his life when still a young boy, forced one day to remain indoors, Lydgate seeks entertainment in the small family library. There, he climbs on a chair to reach an old encyclopedia on a high shelf, hoping he will find something fresh in it. The dusty, dingy volume on

anatomy offers Lydgate the light he has sought, the germ of the idea of his profession: 'The page he opened on was under the head of Anatomy, and the first passage that drew his eyes was on the valves of the heart. He was not much acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that valvae were folding doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first vivid notion of finely-adjusted mechanism in the human frame'. The light through the crevice of the folding doors fires his imagination and illuminates the hitherto unknown and invisible. At that moment, Lydgate knows that he will pursue the medical profession: 'the moment of vocation had come, and before he got down from his chair, the world was made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge. From that hour Lydgate felt the growth of an intellectual passion' (173). Lydgate's discovery (the light between the folding doors) echoes that of Dorothea ('the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages') and also the light which would help her see the truth 'as great men have seen it by' (55, 51). In either case the revelation is drawn in ironic tinges, since it lacks a realistic basis, disregarding the external in favor of the internal.

For both Lydgate and Dorothea, discovery signifies liberation from past limitations and seems to signal the exploration of endless vistas. Their goals share similar implications and are full of St Theresan overtones.

Through Casaubon, or so Dorothea believes, she can acquire enough knowledge 'to see how it was possible to lead a grand life here--now--in England' (51); through the medical profession, Lydgate is convinced, he can make 'his life recognized as a factor in the better life of mankind' (195); his plan for the future is 'to do small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world' (178).

By identifying with Bichat whose conception of tissues 'acted necessarily on medical questions as the turning of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street', Lydgate sees himself as a Promethean kind of figure, who will bring light and order to his profession (177). And indeed, Lydgate very early displays the hubristic consciousness of a tragic hero: he is confident, arrogant, and proud of his lucid perception--of his ability, that is, to recognize and steer clear of obstacles which could hinder his progress to his goal: 'About his ordinary bearing there was a certain fling, a fearless expectation of success, a confidence in his own powers and integrity much fortified by contempt for petty obstacles or seductions of which he had had no experience' (152). Monetary matters and other people in his profession, Lydgate believes, could be obstacles in his course, but he is certain his progress will not be hindered by either. His move to Middlemarch away from the temptations of London, the big city, he thinks, would guarantee his success, since he would 'live among people who could hold no rivalry with the pursuit of a great

idea which was to be a twin object with the assiduous practice of his profession' (176). Because Lydgate is certain of his lucid perception, he does not work on its improvement, he does not proceed cautiously, examining carefully the obstacles in his way. His conviction of his own ability to perceive obstacles constitutes his blindness, his fundamental shortcoming, a flaw which one would be tempted to call tragic if it were the flaw that distinguished him from others. Instead, it is only a 'spot of commonness' which he shares with people he considers inferior. Lydgate's spots of commonness 'lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture or women' (179).

Besieged by his perception of beauty, in either Laure's or Rosamond's case, Lydgate does not allow his imagination or his judgement to interfere. Thus he seems to confuse external with internal, identifying surface with depth, beauty with virtue. His attitude towards women is crystallized early in the novels in his initial comparison of Dorothea with Rosamond. A short conversation with Dorothea serves him as sufficient evidence that 'she did not look at things from the proper feminine angle' (122). His superficial remark allies him with Mr Brooke, whom Lydgate would certainly regard as his inferior. Yet Lydgate would agree with Mr Brooke's

condescending view: 'there is a lightness about the feminine mind--a touch and go--music, the fine arts, that kind of thing--they should study those up to a certain point ... but in a light way, you know. A woman should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good old English tune' (89).

In Rosamond, Lydgate believes, he has found that lightness which is not taxing to a man's mind. 'Polished, refined, docile', Rosamond represents for Lydgate a diamond of womanhood, possessing 'that feminine radiance ... which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys' (193). Blinded by the radiance of his ideal type, he reads appearance as substance, interpreting 'the sylph-like frame ... as the sign of a ready intelligent sensitiveness' (638).

Lydgate's confusion of the external with the internal is the primary cause of his fall. Away from his research, he seems to be imaginative in a Featherstone-like fashion: his images are the brood of his own desire. Thus he sees the radiance of Rosamond's eyes brightening up 'all his future with mild sunshine' (385). His marriage to Rosamond is bound to dissolve since it is based on false assumptions of the Casaubon-type. For Lydgate, as for Casaubon, marriage represents a lopsided relationship in which 'everything is given to you and nothing claimed' (385); he dreams that he has found in Rosamond α sensitive, adoring, intelligent, but

submissive creature, 'who venerated his high musings and mementous labours and would never interfere with them' (387).

This is why he is jolted when the real future replaces the imaginary, that is when he finds that he has to cope with Rosamond's dominance, not her anticipated submissiveness. Then even more distressingly he discovers 'his powerlessness over Rosamond' (631). Suddenly he is confronted with an unforeseen reversal of roles; he is no longer the captor but the captive in his wife's web--the diamond has been transformed into a web: 'He had regarded Rosamond's cleverness as precisely of the receptive kind which became a woman. He was now beginning to find out what that cleverness was--what was the shape into which it had run as into a close network aloof and independent' (631). His shock at realizing that his wife has married him for his social prestige is full of ironic overtones, since Lydgate, who had been dazzled by his wife's appearance, expects her to have been attracted to his inner virtues--'his superior knowledge and mental force' (631). At the moment of his crisis, Lydgate seems to be confronted with his own reflection. Instead of the diamond-like radiance he had perceived, he discovers 'a blank unreflecting surface' (632), but does not realize that his own pride has also been a type of 'unreflecting egoism' (383).

Lydgate's pride in his profession is linked to his pride in his perception. Through his vocation Lydgate

believes he has achieved an ideal reconciliation of the internal with the external: 'I should never have been happy in any profession that did not call forth the highest intellectual strain, and yet keep me in warm contact with my neighbours' (194). His profession, he believes, has guaranteed the right vantage point from which he can see life; he is sure that, unlike others, he can see clearly without any 'blinkers' (194). Yet lurking within the self are the opposites which Lydgate sees but does not try to reconcile, and he learns instead to live with the collision. Laure's case, and the loss of judgement ('the sudden impulse of a madman' (181)) she represents, bring forth the first occasion on which Lydgate is torn by opposites: 'He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us' (182). And although Rosamond brings Laure to mind (188), Lydgate does not allow the past to guide his future and cannot foresee the conflict his marriage would create early in his career.

At an early stage of his stay in Middlemarch during his debate over his vote for Farebrother vs Tyke, Lydgate discovers that the balance he has achieved is tenuous. In spite of his resolution not to be submissive to Bulstrode's wishes, not to be hindered by others, Lydgate casts his vote for Tyke, thus experiencing the effect of

the web of the social milieu against which Farebrother had warned him: 'for the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering thread-like pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity' (210). This episode remains 'a sore point in his memory as a case in which the petty medium of Middlemarch had been too strong for him' (217). Again in connection with Farebrother, when Lydgate recommends him to Dorothea as the Vicar for Lowick, Lydgate recognizes the effect of the web. To her question as to why Farebrother has not done more than he has, he replies bitterly; '"I find myself that it's uncommonly difficult to make the right thing work: there are so many string pulling at once' (536-37).

At this point Lydgate has come painfully to recognize that man's character is shaped from the interplay between within and without, an idea which he expresses metaphorically in relation to scientific research as systole and diastole: 'there must be a systole and diastole in all inquiry ... a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object-glass' (690). The perception of the object-glass, in other words, is incomplete unless it is supplemented with the imagination of the whole human horizon. Without imagination, perception is incomplete, and this is what Lydgate fails to understand or apply to his emotional life. The rhythm of shrinking and expanding reminds us of the narrator's whole approach to human character. When she introduces

Lydgate, she says that 'character ... is a process and an unfolding' during which both virtues and faults shrink and expand (178). Indeed, contraction and expansion constitute the primary rhythm of growth as Coleridge's plant illustrates. Shrinking and expanding are emphasized in physical terms, as we have already seen in the unfolding of Casaubon's character, whose lack of imagination is underlined by the narrow suffocating space of the vaults where he is wandering about, or by his shrinking from Dorothea's consolation because 'his was a mind that shrank from pity' (403).

Lydgate's fall away from the ideal self is also associated with narrowness and shrinking. His reliance on gambling as the easy means of escape from his financial difficulties shows how 'his mind was as utterly narrowed into that precipitous crevice of play as if he had been the most ignorant loungeur there' (725). The crevice of the folding doors of the heart, an image that originally offered light, degenerates here into the 'precipitous crevice' in which Lydgate has fallen. The fine contrast and reversal of roles between Fred and Lydgate is intensely vivid and acutely painful to watch:

Fred's blond face and blue eyes, usually bright and careless, ready to give attention to anything that held out a promise for amusement, looking involuntarily grave and almost embarrassed as if by the sight of something unfitting; while Lydgate, who had habitually an air of self-possessed strength, and a certain meditateness that seemed to lie behind his most observant attention, was acting, watching, speaking with that excited narrow consciousness

which reminds one of an animal with
fierce eyes and retractile claws
(724).

Without any hopes for the wide vistas that his
imagination once promised, Lydgate accepts 'his narrowed
lot with sad resignation' (858).

Narrowness and shrinking become even more intense in
his last conversation with Dorothea, when Lydgate is
thankful for her understanding and confides in her his
plans for the future. The circular motion of his life is
apparent here, and full of ironies: '"I must do as other
men do, and think what will please the world and bring in
money; look for a little opening in the London crowd, and
push myself; set up in a watering-place, or go to some
southern town ... and get myself puffed,--that is the
sort of shell I must creep into and try to keep my soul
alive in' (825). Instead of the initial pride in
individuality, we witness his sad sway to conformity. He
moves to London, which he had consciously avoided as the
place that would destroy his professional ambitions. The
crevice of the valves of the heart that offered him the
light of endless vistas is transformed into a 'little
opening in the London crowd', a shell into which he must
creep. The 'watering-place' also emphasizes the cyclical
motion as it points to the pond of the 'Prelude'; but the
cygnet of the 'Prelude' seems to be here metamorphosed
into one of the ducklings. Lydgate's withdrawal into the
shell is contrasted with Dorothea's riddance of her shell
(the widow's cap) which liberates her from the oppression

of the past and initiates the journey towards integration and self-fulfilment.

Through Dorothea, Lydgate comes to understand the full meaning of ardour, the saving effect that powerful feeling has on others. Dorothea's trust in him when everyone else has doubted his innocence, is invigorating, giving him the strength he needs in order to believe in the self again; 'the presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character' (819). Dorothea's ardour radiates, diffuses as the water of a fountain spreads from a tiny opening. Lydgate's perception of Dorothea as 'a fountain of friendship towards men' (826) is another transformation of the original germ, and precisely of the jewels which Dorothea did not take off when she resumed her work but thought 'of often having ... by her, to feed her eye at these little fountains of pure colour' (36). Like a diamond, Dorothea here radiates light and affects others by her warmth and sympathy.

Lydgate seems to be returning to the point of departure, but there is a considerable difference. His fall is accompanied with, or rather results in, a series of anagnorises. By means of his suffering he comes to recognize that beautiful appearance does not always reveal splendid depths, that 'a pretty covering of flowers and verdure' can be concealing a swamp (633). By

painful experiences Lydgate is also trained to foresee the consequences of his actions rather than to act on impulse. His financial straits force him to revise his old motto 'if things were done at all, they must be done properly' (634), and to begin to see things from a new point of view: 'having been roused to discern consequences which he had never been in the habit of tracing, he was preparing to act ... with some of the rigour ... that he would have applied in pursuing experiment' (636). His foresight seems to initiate the journey towards imaginative seeing. Gradually, Lydgate moves beyond the self and pain he himself experiences and begins to identify with the misery Rosamond feels as she sees her former dreams and castles in the air demolished one by one. When Lydgate sees the other as the self, he has travelled a very long way indeed from his view of Rosamond as a sylph who would worship and entertain him. His cry, '"when I hurt you, I hurt part of my own life' (718), is the culmination of imaginative projection, the gain Lydgate has acquired through intense suffering, the moment when Lydgate and Dorothea become the only characters in the novel that stand in the foreground as the ones capable of experiencing the sympathetic imagination.

Yet one feels bitter disappointment with Lydgate's gain, with his compromise, his willingness to renounce his goals for Rosamond's sake. For us Lydgate remains a victim of externals as he moves out of our sight and is transplanted to London. We cannot help wondering whether

his life would have been different if he could have somehow integrated his emotional and scientific life and had seen love and marriage through the same kind of imagination he wanted to apply to research the imagination 'that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy' (194). Indeed, Lydgate's definition of the scientific imagination as the ability to see the distant and the imperceptible carries Coleridgean overtones; at the same time, it seems to be an extension of Will's definition of the true seeing as taking place within. But Lydgate's belief seems to be theoretic in matters of everyday living. Our last glimpse of Lydgate as a successful man who considers himself a failure reveals the tension between the self and others, between within and without, the internal and the external, opposites which, in Lydgate's case, remain irreconcilable.

Our understanding of Lydgate's character is incomplete without a consideration of Rosamond and Bulstrode, the characters primarily responsible for his fall. At first glance, Rosamond is Dorothea's glaring opposite--egocentric, vain, unsympathetic; she does however reflect some of Dorothea's experiences. From her point of view, she is married to an unsympathetic man, and, like Dorothea, Rosamond feels the pain of shattered dreams as the reality of marriage replaces the illusions of the days of courtship. To Rosamond's delicate taste,

Lydgate's scientific research seems 'like a morbid vampire's taste' (711). And, like Dorothea, Rosamond finds that her husband reveals during their marriage 'peculiar views of things which had never entered into the dialogue of courtship' (712). Her marriage, which she had regarded as liberation, turns out to be a bitter disappointment, since it 'had lost its charm of encouraging delightful dreams. It had freed her from the disagreeables of her father's house, but it had not given her everything that she wished and hoped' (711).

Of course the differences between Dorothea and Rosamond outweigh the similarities by far. Apart from moments of ennui (647), or brief conversations with Lydgate before her marriage, Rosamond's portrait is never drawn with a window in the background, mainly because her nature is not disturbed by collisions, or by the interplay between the external and the internal fundamental to imagination. In her portrait the window is replaced by a mirror, for Rosamond is a reflection--not an original. She is the reflection of her teacher, Mrs Lemon, and always strains to be a perfect lady, to please by conforming, not by questioning any set standards; in fact, Rosamond 'was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her physique: she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own' (144). Rosamond's narcissistic nature is exquisitely painted in a picture that serves as a sharp antithesis to Mary's plainness. Next to the 'nymph-like figure' with 'pure blondness' and 'eyes of

heavenly blue' stands 'the brown patch'. Thus Mary finds herself between two Rosamonds, 'two nymphs--the one in the glass and the one out of it'. Rosamond's portrait in this scene is completed with another fine touch as she, acting her role of the perfect lady who can afford to be generous, turns to Mary and utters the cliché, 'beauty is of very little consequence in reality'. Yet even this cliché is undermined as Rosamond turns her head towards Mary 'but with eyes swerving towards the new view of her neck in the glass' (139-40).

The first mirror scene serves as the germ of other mirror images, as the germ of Rosamond's character which remains unaltered, without self-revelations, without growth. There are no significant transformations of the original image, since there are no changes in Rosamond's nature. Her egotistical attitude governs her perspective on others; she cannot imagine other people's states of mind except 'as a material cut into shape by her own wishes' (834). Even in moments of affection, such as the scene where Lydgate fastens her plaits, Rosamond's narcissism prevails; blind to his presence, she accepts his tender words complacently, 'as if she had been a serene and lovely image, now and then miraculously dimpling towards her votary (709). Even her perception does not involve an inner-outer interplay. Image does not trigger idea. Rosamond simply cannot break away from the self, cannot accept that someone else could have a centre, does not recognize the law of bicentrality; she is a 'shallow nature' (709), a 'blank unreflecting

surface', which radiates no light, and even though she considers herself 'an exquisite ornament' (632), she is not a precious one, a jewel that radiates light and affects others by its lustre.

In fact, Rosamond is not identified with the light or wideness of the imagination, but with the darkness and narrowness of imperceptiveness. This is poignantly illustrated in the culmination of her conflict with Lydgate. To Lydgate's desperate cry for help, Rosamond responds with a question, '"What can I do Tertius"', and later on, '"Are we to go without spoons and forks then?'" Her inability to feel is directly proportional to her inability to imagine, since feeling, as we have seen, is the primary quality of the imagination. Lack of imagination, or what is paradoxically called 'realistic imagination' (146), is defined though Rosamond. Affected only by the immediately perceptible, she cannot see below the surface, cannot envision the distant and the imperceptible, cannot learn from the past to foresee the future. Her attempt to frustrate Lydgate's efforts to sell their house reveals her short-sightedness as she congratulates herself on having 'hindered the event which she immediately dreaded', at the moment when her husband feels 'bitter disappointment, as if he had opened a door out of a suffocating place and had found it walled up' (706).

There is only a flickering revelation in Rosamond's life, namely her confession to Dorothea, which is made under 'the subduing influence of Dorothea's emotion'

(856). Furthermore, Rosamond's brief moments of affection for Lydgate seem to be 'the reflex' of Dorothea's 'energy' (857). But since Rosamond's revelation is not fed from within, it is quickly extinguished. Like Lydgate's Rosamond's journey is cyclical; but she reaches the point of departure without any transformations. The final scene of her driving in a carriage with her daughters is merely another role which Mrs Lemon's student enjoys playing with an intense awareness of her audience. And Lydgate's comparison of Rosamond to his 'basil plant' (893), is a manifestation of the 'soft living substance' that can make its way 'in spite of opposing rock' (379). Without an interplay of the external and internal imagination languishes, as we have seen. And without imagination there is no growth, no development. Her character remains static throughout.

Another exquisite actor sharing Rosamond's acting abilities and displaying some of Casaubon's characteristics is Rosamond's uncle, Mr Bulstrode. His first encounter with his brother-in-law, Mr Vincy, reveals his sense of audience; after his little speech on Fred's extravagances, he is worried about the 'unsatisfactory reflection of himself in the coarse unflattering mirror which that manufacturer's mind presented to the subtler lights and shadows of his fellow-men' (159). A great part of Bulstrode's inward life is 'made up of the thoughts he believes other men to have about him' (741), and his primary dread when Raffles appears is lest Middlemarch should discover that his life

as a devout Christian has been a sham (782-83).

Bulstrode, then, seems to be able to foresee consequences, but his foresight is induced only when he is threatened with public humiliation. In the past, though, his blindness to consequences is evident in his concealment of the fact that Mrs Dunkirk's daughter has been found.

Bulstrode's life demonstrates how past, present, and future are interwoven, not independent, parts of a man's whole life: 'with memory set smarting like a reopened wound, a man's past is not simply a dead history, an outworn preparation of the present ... it is a still quivering part of himself, bringing shudders and bitter flavours' (663). Like modern psychologists, George Eliot shows the multidimensional nature of memory, involving space, time, shudders, pain, bitter flavours. Through Raffles' appearance, Bulstrode is forced to relive the past which he has conveniently forgotten. In fact the images of his past become more vivid than those of his present, as he experiences 'the scenes of his earlier life coming between him and everything else, as obstinately as when we look through the window from a lighted room, the objects we turn our backs on are still before us, instead of the grass and the trees' (663). Yet, though the image of the window often represents an interplay between external and internal, or collisions within a character, in Bulstrode's case there have been no such conflicts, since he, unlike Lydgate, can deftly reconcile what appears irreconcilable. Thus his

'religious activity could not be incompatible with his business as soon as he argued himself into not feeling it incompatible (665). And since the systole/diastole rhythm is absent, there is no expansion, no growth of his character.

His imagination is of the Featherstone type, as his images are also the brood of desire: 'A man vows, and yet will not cast away the means of breaking his vow ... but the desires which tend to break it are at work in him dimly, and make their way into his imagination.... Raffles dead was the image that brought release' (761). And since Providence does not help to bring the rescue Bulstrode needs, Bulstrode helps it along by completely disregarding Lydgate's orders, that is, by not telling Mrs Abel when to stop giving Raffles opium and by allowing her to give the patient alcohol. Bulstrode's dark figure seems to be drawn in Casaubon-like accents. Darkness, shrinking and withering--systole without diastole--are the final touches. Confronted with his wife, he 'shrank from confession' preferring to postpone it for a better time, when he would be dying, since then, he hopes, 'she might listen without recoiling from his touch' (882). His wife's 'grief-worn face', he feels, has aged 'to keep sad company with his own withered features' (883). Bulstrode's 'deep distress at the sight of her suffering' shows that he is capable of moving beyond the self to experience someone else's pain; but his suffering at that moment also illustrates that he can

be affected only by the immediately perceivable, not the imaginable--by the near, not the distant.

The 'movement of new compassion and old tenderness' that Harriet Bulstrode experiences 'like a great wave' at the sight of her 'withered and shrunken' (807-08) husband is reminiscent of Dorothea's compassion for Lydgate. Harriet's silent 'promise of faithfulness' at the sight of her husband's desolation serves also as a fine contrast to Rosamond's cold indifference to her husband's despair. Although Harriet's love of handsome clothes briefly links her with Rosamond (330), her ordeal allies her mainly with Dorothea. After the discovery of her husband's past concealment, Harriet locks herself in her room 'to get used to her maimed consciousness, her poor lopped life' (806). The change of clothes from the cheerful adorned attire to a 'plain black gown' (807), also reminds us of Dorothea's change after her night of intense introspection, and demonstrates a similar desire to attune the external to the internal.

Humiliation, shame, and disgrace before the world outside do not quell Harriet's sympathetic imagination which reaches out for her husband at the moment of crisis: 'after an instant of scorching shame in which she felt only the eyes of the world, with one leap of her heart she was at his side in mournful but unrepublishing fellowship with shame and isolation' (806). The 'leap of heart' again brings to mind Dorothea's 'impetuous generosity' that 'would have leaped at once to the vindication of Lydgate' (789), and, of course, reminds us

of Wordsworth's 'My Heart Leaps Up', which extols man's child-like responsiveness to ordinary events. Harriet's and Dorothea's reactions illustrate how a strong feeling characterizes a sympathetic imagination. Like Dorothea, Harriet grows through constriction and expansion. Her shrinking within herself is followed by her expanding towards her husband. It is important that image (the ritual of the change of clothes) is followed by idea (of helping her husband) which is in turn embodied by action (her silent forgiveness).

Harriet's 'good honest glance' (330) is a feature which connects her with Mary also. Honesty is Mary's foremost virtue, a quality which, we are told, a painter would take care to express in her portrait: 'Rembrandt would have painted her with pleasure, and would have made her broad features look out of the canvas with intelligent honesty' (140). Undoubtedly, Mary is Rosamond's opposite, and the antithesis of the two women is finely pronounced in the mirror scene when Mary exclaims without any illusions, '"What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy!'" This mirror scene, in turn, brings to mind the first pier glass scene involving Celia and Dorothea, an image which also serves to underline the contrasts between the two sisters. Mary in fact is another reflection of Dorothea. Farebrother's first comment about her in his conversation with Lydgate connects Mary with Dorothea. When Lydgate says that Mary is a quiet girl at Featherstone's whom he has hardly noticed, Farebrother comments: '"She has taken notice of

you, though, depend upon it.... Oh, she gauges everybody"' (205). Mary's keen powers of perception at this point remind us of Dorothea's imagination: 'she had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr Casaubon's mind' (46). Like Dorothea, Mary is associated with light and windows. At times, for instance, her smile has 'the full illumination of fun' and her eyes are 'nothing more than clear windows where observation sate laughingly' (167). Featherstone's death brings light--of the fire and the morning--and windows together in the background as Mary's figure moves quietly in the foreground after her honest act (354). And the last image of Mary 'in white-haired placidity' is also painted at the open window--the same window where Mary 'in the days of old Peter Featherstone, had often been ordered to look out for Mr Lydgate' (892).

Like Dorothea, Mary seems to display both blindness and insight. Her blindness to Farebrother's love for her reminds us of Dorothea's imperceptiveness to Sir James Chettam's feelings. Mary and Fred seem to take turns accusing each other of blindness. '"It is impossible that you should not see it all clearly enough--you who see everything"' (624), Fred reproaches Mary, alluding to Farebrother's affection for her; but Mary, in turn, accuses Fred of an inability to understand that Farebrother has left them alone to speak to each other: '"I am disappointed that you should be so blind to his delicate feeling"' (624-25). Blindness to another's feeling constitutes Mary's definition of lack of

imagination, beautifully illustrated through the story of Tom, the giant, who knocked down the pretty house of the ants and thought they did not mind, since '"he couldn't hear them cry or see them use their pocket-handkerchiefs"' (693).

Fred, in fact, like his sister Rosamond, seems to be another version of the giant. His imagination, unless it is supported by perception, slackens. Preoccupied with his own wishes, he is unable to understand others, and his loan from the Garths illustrates his inability to imagine 'the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen' (281). But, unlike his sister, Fred seems to be shaped and affected by others' feelings. Thus Farebrother's confession of how tempting it was to let him be ruined by gambling so that he himself could marry Mary, moves Fred in much the same way that Dorothea's ardour affects Lydgate. In the flickering starlight Fred is 'moved quite newly' by Farebrother's admission: 'Some one highly susceptible to the contemplation of a fine act had said, that it produces a sort of regenerating shudder through the frame, and makes one feel ready to begin a new life. A good degree of that effect was just then present in Fred Vincy' (728). Fred's thankful admission, '"I will try that your goodness shall not be thrown away"', signals the beginning of a life travelled in the light of the imagination.

Farebrother's generous act is a good example of the generalization that 'the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts' (896), and it illustrates Farebrother's sympathetic imagination. In his interactions with others Farebrother displays an unusual combination of lucid perception and fine imagination. His early conversations with Lydgate demonstrate his awareness of the collisions between the self and others, the obstacles that can hinder one's good purposes. To Lydgate's assured conviction that he can pursue his profession independently, without flattering others, Farebrother responds sceptically: "But then you must be sure of having the value, and you must keep yourself independent. Very few men can do that. Either you slip out of service altogether, and become good for nothing, or you wear the harness and draw a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you" (204). Farebrother's perception of Eros as an obstacle rather than, as Lydgate conceives it, a means of furtherance, again illustrates Farebrother's insight, foreshadowing Lydgate's fall. Upon hearing Lydgate's plan to get married sooner than he had originally planned, in order to pursue his work more diligently, Farebrother warns: "Eros has degenerated; he began by introducing order and harmony, and now he brings back chaos" (383). Connected with his allusion to Eros is another moment of sharp perception, when he realizes Rosamond's estrangement from her husband, in spite of her seemingly unaltered attitude, and compares her to 'a sculptured Psyche modelled to look another way' (692),

Furthermore, his ability to 'enter into' Lydgate's 'position as a newcomer who had his own professional objects to secure' (207) demonstrates Farebrother's sympathetic imagination and serves as an antithesis to Lydgate's insensitivity to the clergyman's needs. Unlike Farebrother, Lydgate at the time had 'no power of imagining the part which the want of money plays in determining the actions of men ... and he never entered into any calculation of the ratio between the Vicar's income and his more or less necessary expenditure' (209).

With his 'bright eyes' (205), and the inner outer interplay beaming in his face (when he knows that he has the Lowick living) Farebrother is linked with both Dorothea and Will: 'the gladness in his face was of that active kind which seems to have energy enough not only to flash outwardly, but to light up busy vision within: one seemed to see thoughts, as well as delight, in his glances' (553). Yet capable as he is of entering into another's place, Farebrother seems to be blind to Lydgate's innocence. Against Dorothea's eagerness to vindicate Lydgate, Farebrother's words, though true, reflect detachment: '"character is not cut in marble--it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do"' (790-91). But Farebrother's dim understanding helps to bring forth the brilliance of Dorothea's insight. Farebrother's role in this case is characteristic of him. Although he himself does not

change, he helps others, like Dorothea and Lydgate, to a better understanding of themselves and of others.

Whether we consider the major or the minor characters in Middlemarch, we can see how the novel is 'a very wonderful whole, the slow creation of long interchanging influences' (444). Dorothea is in the centre of that whole and all the lines drawn from the circumference converge upon her alone; she is the receptive and diffusive centre, because through her character ideas or images, which seem only fragments in the portrayal of other characters, reach their culmination, fruition, completion, wholeness.

Middlemarch pivots on the process towards widening vision. Perceptual and imaginative seeing are two halves of the whole--when one is missing, vision is dim or blurred. The conviction that one can see lucidly is the biggest obstacle to one's perceptual or imaginative progress. Such a belief makes minor characters static rather than dynamic. Mrs Cadwallader, for instance, remains unaltered throughout the novel. Her words at the end, when she hears of Dorothea's marriage to Will, are similar to those in the beginning--she is certain she can see what others are unaware of. Addressing her husband, she remarks triumphantly: '"Another time you will admit that I have some foresight; or rather you will contradict me and be just as blind as ever"' (873). And Celia, a grown woman at the end, believes what she upheld as a little girl, that she can teach Dorothea how to see more clearly 'by opening a little window for the daylight of

her own understanding to enter among the strange coloured lamps by which Dodo habitually saw' (878). The intended irony here is obvious since Celia's nature never grows through the external-internal interplay.

What distinguishes Dorothea from other characters is her recognition of her own physical and mental short-sightedness. Without a trace of vanity, she tells Sir James that she does not like a dog for a pet because she is short-sighted and she is 'afraid of treading on it' (53). When her uncle asks her for her opinion of Will's sketch, she admits her ignorance on the matter, '"I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much praised. They are a language I do not understand"' (105). And her uncertainty as to the vocation in her life is expressed in similar terms: 'I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now: everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know' (51). Dorothea's acknowledgment of her ignorance reveals her receptivity, the sense of wonder in her nature, a quality often is described in terms of openness, wideness, expansion--all of them attributes of the imagination.

Nevertheless, Dorothea's early interactions with Casaubon demonstrate an imbalance between the internal and the external perspectives. In the first part of the novel, during the development of her relationship to Casaubon, the assertion of Dorothea's inward perspective takes place. Her illusions about Casaubon, as well as her later absorption with her disillusionment, are given

in interior terms. It is only after Casaubon's death that Dorothea moves outward, daring to adopt the exterior perspective. Through images of antithetical qualities, George Eliot's imagination 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate'; and it reveals itself at the end of the novel, 'in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'. At the end, Dorothea bridges the interior, the self, and the exterior, the others, and thus qualities which seemed incongruous turn out to be integral parts of the whole.

In the beginning of the novel Dorothea's imagination displays elements of a hubristic consciousness. Unlike Lydgate, who is proud of his lucid perception, Dorothea is arrogant about her penetrative imagination, thinking that she is well able to see beneath the surface:

"It is painful in you, Celia, that you will look at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man's face".

"Has Mr Casaubon a great soul?"
Celia was not without a touch of naive malice.

"Yes, I believe he has", said Dorothea, with the full voice of decision. "Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology" (43).

From the beginning of her acquaintance with Casaubon, Dorothea prides herself on her ability to see 'in him, to see, as she assumes, his 'great soul', and she believes that he, unlike either Celia or Sir James, can also understand 'the higher inward life' and can share with her 'some spiritual communion' (44).

The limitations of such a perspective are subtly depicted in the significant images at the opening of the following chapter, where 'by this time', Dorothea believes, she 'had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself had brought' (46). Because of her inward perspective, Dorothea fails to see the striking paradox. She is certain she can look 'deep into', not a lake, but a 'reservoir', and sees there reflected a very narcissistic image: 'every quality she had brought' in 'vague labyrinthine extent'. The similarities between Dorothea and Hamlet are, indeed, striking here. Coleridge's comments on Hamlet seem to describe Dorothea. Through Hamlet, so Coleridge believed, Shakespeare intended 'to pourtray a person in whose view the external world, and all its incidents and objects, were comparatively dim, and of no interest in themselves, and which began to interest only, when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind' (SC, II, 192).

'Dim' or 'vague', in this case, is significant because it defines the clarity with which Dorothea sees. This word also points to the lack of any sensuous details from the images pertaining to Dorothea's inward perspective. Such perspective is bound to be incomplete since it disregards externals. In Casaubon, Dorothea believes, she can find an inward light by which she can see. Anticipating her marriage to him she thrillingly rejoices that she 'would be allowed to live continually

in the light of a mind that she could reverence' (67), for Casaubon can 'illuminate principle with the widest knowledge' (44-5). Yet in spite of so much light, Dorothea is unable to see anything specific. Her exclamation, 'I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by' (51), is as abstract as her other remarks concerning her need to rely on someone else to help her 'see which opinions had the best foundation'. Or later on, Greek and Latin, we are told, represent for her the 'provinces of masculine knowledge' a 'standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly' (88).

Truth, 'seen more truly', knowledge, principles, are all vague abstractions devoid of any meaning and significance in spite of all the light Casaubon may shed on them. Their meaninglessness and vagueness are emphasized when Dorothea receives Casaubon's proposal and she is seized by 'the rush of solemn emotions in which thoughts became vague and images floated uncertainly' (67). We are never told what kind of images she actually sees because she is about to enter a 'visionary future' where the physical and external world are disregarded. But she is not unaware of the exclusion of the physical world from her future life; in fact, she sees its absence not as a deprivation but as a necessity. Objecting to her uncle's remark that Casaubon is 'a little buried in books', Dorothea proudly responds, '"when a man has great studies and is writing a great work, he must of course give up seeing much of the world"' (62). Her detachment

from the outer world at this point is obvious during one of her walks when 'she looked before her, not consciously seeing, but absorbing into the intensity of her mood, the solemn glory of the afternoon with its long swathes of light between the far-off rows of limes, whose shadows touched each other' (49). Overwhelmed by her exultation in the world within, Dorothea internalizes even the external world, thus reminding us again of Hamlet, who, so Coleridge maintained, had 'thoughts, images, and fancy ... far more vivid than his perceptions, and his very perceptions instantly passing thro' the medium of his contemplations, and acquiring as they pass a form and colour not naturally their own' (SC, I, 37).

Thus engrossed in her inward perspective, Dorothea is shocked to discover, through Celia, that she has misread Sir James's intentions. Celia's indignant reproach crystallizes Dorothea's problem: '"I thought it right to tell you, because you went on as you always do, never looking just where you are, and treading in the wrong place. You always see what nobody else sees; it is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain"' (59). Dorothea at this point is indeed imaginative but her perspective is incomplete since it lacks perception. Her response to Celia's comments reveals the narrowness of her view. Like a tragic heroine, she does not heed someone else's admonition, but is instead exasperated with the 'intolerable narrowness and the purblind conscience of the society around her' (60). The visit to Lowick, on the other hand, is an

example of Dorothea's perception being blurred by her imagination. Unlike Celia, who is oppressed by the 'melancholy-looking' manor, Dorothea finds the house and the grounds 'all that she could wish' (99). Perception here is no doubt modified by anticipation. Since she believes Casaubon to be an ideal spouse, she has expected to enjoy everything he loves or admires. Furthermore, her remark seems to illustrate one of the concepts we have already examined, that our first reaction to a perceptual event is emotional and subjective.

Her awareness of the suffocating qualities of the interior world she has led herself into soon becomes poignant during her stay in Rome, when the 'new real future' replaces the imaginary, and for the first time she feels 'with a stifling depression that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by ante-rooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither' (227-28). From a social life 'which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led nowhither' (51), she discovers herself suddenly transferred to 'winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither'.

To escape from Casaubon's 'winding passages' Dorothea withdraws inward as if in an attempt to find order within. Since her stay in Rome 'with life made a new problem ... she had been becoming more and more aware, with a certain terror, that her mind was continually sliding into inward fits of anger and

repulsion or else into forlorn weariness' (228). But her abandonment to 'the depths of her emotion' is as restrictive as her entanglement in Casaubon's ante-rooms, because in her absorption with herself 'she was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity. She had not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only felt that her own was beating violently' (232). Because she cannot see or hear Casaubon's pain (his shock at finding his 'young bride' transformed into a 'cruel outward accuser' (232)), Dorothea assumes it does not exist, and here she displays Tom's, the giant's, lack of imagination. Yet painfully and gradually she comes to recognize the law of bicentrality, to understand that Casaubon has 'an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference' (243). Her internal turmoil partly explains her inability to understand Rome. Here again Dorothea internalizes the outward. 'The best galleries', 'the grandest ruins', and 'the most glorious churches' become transformed into an 'oppressive masquerade of ages, in which her own life too seemed to become a masque with enigmatical costumes' (224-25). Her experience is completely internalized; there is no inner-outer interplay. Dorothea's hasty sightseeing, often interrupted by her drives out to the Campagna 'where she could feel alone with the earth and sky' (225) demonstrates the impossibility of an aesthetic experience when one is preoccupied with personal

matters.³ Besides, Dorothea sees too much all at once: 'ruins and basilicas palaces and colossi.... all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual' (225). As a result, her imagination does not have an opportunity to rest, to find, as Ruskin says, 'places to lie down and stretch its limbs in; kindly vacancies, beguiling it back into action, with pleasant and cautious sequence of incident' (MP, III, 186).

Dorothea's bewilderment with art in Rome also stems from her lack of knowledge as well as the conflict between the pagan and the puritanical elements in her nature, a collision which Nauman's portrait of Dorothea accurately captures: 'an antique form animated by Christian sentiment--a sort of Christian Antigone--sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion' (221). Dorothea's figure against a pedestal near the reclining Ariadne, 'her large eyes fixed dreamily on a streak of sunlight', is a transformation of her first portrait with the diamonds, whose lustre is brought out by a gleam of sunlight; simultaneously, this picture in Rome sets off a series of other scenes when imagination overpowers perception, when the internal dominates over the external, and Dorothea looks without seeing. Her picture further reveals the cyclical motion of Dorothea's imagination. The movement, initiated by her suffering in Rome, sets Dorothea apart from those characters who do not see the present in the light of the past, cannot

³See Dewey, p. 220.

anticipate the future and are unable to gain a larger perspective. Present, past, and future, all come together in Dorothea's thoughts when Will and Naumann find her oblivious to Ariadne and her surroundings: 'she did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor ... she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home ... and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been' (235). The movement from the past to the future shows how by means of her imagination Dorothea attempts to interpret her experience 'in the light of past and future experiences'.⁴ Looking back at the past ('as it had been') initiates the widening of Dorothea's perspective which has so far encompassed only present and future expectations.

Disenchantment with her marriage forces her to see the quixotic elements of her imagination in her past encounters with Casaubon during the days of their courtship, when she interpreted everything 'as provisional and preliminary', and when 'Mr Casaubon had ... dwelt on some explanation or questionable detail of which Dorothea did not see the bearing', she had imagined that 'such imperfect coherence seemed due to the brokenness of their intercourse, and, supported by her faith in their future' (228). Here Dorothea recognizes the danger in completing the incomplete, in expecting the future to provide what the present lacks.

⁴Warnock, p. 179.

But Dorothea's greatest attainment in Rome is her full understanding of the meaning of knowledge, the goal she has yearned for and believed she could reach with Casaubon's help. To Casaubon's questions, '"Does this interest you, Dorothea? Shall we stay a little longer?'" Dorothea responds with another question, '"But do you care about them?"', feeling that for Casaubon 'going or staying were alike dreary' (229). Then she realizes that Casaubon's mind is of the kind 'in which years full of knowledge seem to have issued in a blank absence of interest or sympathy' (229). The moment Dorothea comes to perceive that knowledge can result in lack of feeling, her goal becomes valueless, since 'knowledge passing into feeling' (256) is what she seeks to experience. Consequently, her assertion in Naumann's studio, '"I would rather feel that painting is beautiful than have to read it as an enigma"' (246), seems to be a reaction to Casaubon's knowledge without feeling; furthermore, such an idea is congruent with her belief that feeling is prerequisite to seeing, or that feeling is indeed a way of seeing. Explaining to Will her confused response to Rome, Dorothea traces the problem of seeing without feeling:

"I never could see any beauty in the pictures which my uncle told me all judges thought very fine. And I have gone about with just the same ignorance in Rome.... I am seeing so much all at once, and not understanding half of it.... It is painful to be told that anything is very fine and not be able to feel that it is fine--something like being

blind, while people talk of the sky"
(238).

Her comments bring to mind Gombrich's emphasis on the role emotion plays in our enjoyment of art. Without an individual's own projections, art works, as Gombrich asserts, remain a 'meaningless armature'.⁵

In Rome Dorothea discovers that she can no longer 'expect with her former delightful confidence that she should see any wide opening where she followed him [Casaubon]' (229), and her presentiment about her future is actualized upon her return to Lowick. From this point on, her house is only a reflection of her inner feelings, and her inward perspective is depicted in conspicuously spatial terms. Lowick which had 'no oppression for her' upon her first visit before getting married, now becomes suffocatingly restricting, and even the outer landscape contributes to Dorothea's sense of imprisonment, as she sadly ruminates: 'the duties of her married life, contemplated as so great beforehand, seemed to be shrinking with the furniture and the white vapour-walled landscape. The clear heights where she expected to walk in full communion had become difficult to see even in her imagination' (307). Systole without diastole takes over as her surroundings become an extension of her inward anxiety, as she cuts herself off from the past, not just the imagined future: 'each remembered thing ... was disenchanted, was deadened as an unlit transparency' (308).

⁵Art and Illusion, p. 176.

Her physical and moral isolation (her shrinking) is further emphasized by Featherstone's funeral during which Dorothea, along with the others, moves to the window to watch. But the procession remains apart from her own consciousness as she watches everything with the 'interest of a monk on his holiday tour'; the funeral becomes a part of the 'dream-like association of something alien and ill-understood', which 'with the deepest secrets of her experience seemed to mirror that sense of loneliness which was due to the very ardour of Dorothea's nature' (360). Furthermore, the event, as the narrator asserts, eventually becomes only part of the memory of a painful experience 'just as the vision of St Peter's at Rome was inwoven with moods of despondency', since 'scenes which make vital changes in our neighbours' lot are but the background of our own, yet ... they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history' (360). Here, Dorothea is associated with the images of egotism--the mirror and the web ('inwoven'). Her self-pity and self-absorption are only further aspects of egotism. Though the window is open, Dorothea remains physically and mentally within--a detached spectator. Someone else's death is only the background of her own misery.

But Dorothea tries to reject her melancholy by concentrating on improving Ladislav's future, and convincing her husband to change his will and to allot some of his property to him. Thoughtfulness for someone else temporarily dispels the darkness of her mood and is

welcomed like a revelation: 'the vision of all this as what ought to be done seemed to Dorothea like a sudden letting in of daylight, waking her from her previous stupidity and incurious self-absorbed ignorance about her husband's relation to others' (407-08). Dorothea's absorption with Will's future serves as an occasion for the full definition of her blindness as unorthodox seeing, imaginative daring: 'She was blind, you see, to many things obvious to others... yet her blindness to whatever did not lie in her own pure purpose carried her safely by the side of precipices where vision would have been perilous with fear' (408). Carried away by her own ardour, she does not see Casaubon's outrage, forcing her into a worse predicament. After having a glimpse of light, the darkness of her interior imprisonment is even more unbearable (410).

But Dorothea's imaginative seeing does become finer during this oppressive stage of her life. Casaubon's illness produces a step forward in the direction of full integration. After Casaubon's interview with Lydgate, Dorothea reaches out for her husband to alleviate his pain, but he rigidly rejects her and she seeks refuge in her boudoir, thus, once again, physically and spiritually isolating herself. Again her isolation takes place by a window, underlining Dorothea's lack of perception of the world without, or her internalizing of externals at times of crisis: 'She threw herself on a chair, not heeding that she was in the dazzling sun-rays: if there were discomfort in that, how could she tell that it was not

part of her inward misery?' (463). Her thinking on this occasion, however, unlike that in previous similar scenes, involves a series of concrete auditory and visual images which convey how true seeing takes place within. The movement from the self to the other is poignantly made as Dorothea acknowledges the death of her past expectations and tries to adjust to the disillusioned present: 'Like one who has lost his way and is weary, she sat and saw as in one glance all the paths of her young hope which she should never find again. And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw her own and her husband's solitude--how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him' (463). Once again Dorothea is able to understand an event in the light of her past and future experiences. Memory of her past liberates her from her preoccupation with her present situation. Simultaneously, the stream of her thoughts seems to prove that 'memory and all the life of images and words which goes with it, is one with the age-old acquisition of the distance senses, and with that development of constructive imagination ... wherein at length we find the most complete release from the narrowness of presented time and place'.⁶ Indeed the concrete image of her husband and the imaginative projection into his unfortunate lot enable Dorothea for the first time to break her spiritual isolation by identifying with his misery, by replacing self-absorption with commiseration:

⁶Bartlett, p. 314.

'That thought with which Dorothea had gone out to meet her husband--her conviction that he had been asking about the possible arrest of all his work, and that the answer must have wrung his heart, could not be long without rising beside the image of him, like a shadowy monitor looking at her anger with sad remonstrance' (464). The opening of her door signals the movement away from isolation, depicts the idea incarnate, shows how imaginative thinking has to be accompanied by, or embodied in, action--the internal transfigured into the external: 'She put her hand into her husband's, and they went along the broad corridor together' (465).

Even after this momentous occasion, Dorothea is however still confined by the interior, as her conflicts with her husband continue, culminating in his request for her promise to abide by his will after his death. But here the cyclical movement of Dorothea's imagination is made finer and wider as it binds together not only her own present and future but merges Casaubon's past, present, and future: 'Dorothea's pity turned from her own future to her husband's past--nay, to his present hard struggle with a lot which had grown out of that past: the lonely labour ... the goal receding ... and now at last the sword visibly trembling above him' (520).

Only after his death does the movement towards the exterior commence, marking in spatial terms Dorothea's deliverance and approaching integration. When she returns to Lowick, after Casaubon's death, the exterior and the interior no longer remain two distinct entities,

for 'the shutters were all opened at Lowick Manor, and the morning gazed calmly into the library ... and the evening laden with roses entered silently into the blue-green boudoir where Dorothea chose oftenest to sit' (582). Since such a movement coincides with Will's arrival at Lowick, we are inclined to think that he is part of the reason for its occurrence. As soon as Will is taken to a room to wait for Dorothea, we are told that 'the window was open; and a winged visitor, buzzing in and out now and then without minding the furniture, made the room look less formal and uninhabited' (585). Will, in fact, has been long associated by Dorothea with the exterior. During his first visit to Dorothea in Rome, for instance, she sees him in terms of the outdoors and she is not in the least tempted to look 'in his soul': 'the first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness' (241). And while still with Casaubon, 'the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air' (396).

But it is not only Ladislav who becomes part of her outward perspective. Her plans, after Casaubon's death, involve the outdoors--to construct '"a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well"' (594). While she is looking forward to her interview with Lydgate, during which she intends to vindicate his innocence, she is immersed in thoughts which flow outward; even 'in her luxurious home, wandering under the boughs of her own great trees, her

thought was going out over the lot of others' (817). As she is convincing herself, later on, that Will is not involved with Rosamond, we discover that 'Dorothea's nature was of that kind: her own passionate faults lay along the easily-counted open channels of her ardent character' (829). When she envisions her future, before her visit to Rosamond, she sees herself outdoors, no longer within the confining walls of a house: 'and in the long valley of her life, which looked so flat and empty of way-marks, guidance would come as she walked along the road, and saw her fellow-passengers by the way' (830).

In moments of crisis, however, Dorothea still resorts to her inward perspective; her visit to Rosamond demonstrates this tendency. When she enters Rosamond's house, 'Dorothea had less of outward vision than usual this morning, being filled with images of things as they had been and were going to be'. Under the influence of the 'inward vision', Dorothea misinterprets Will's presence there, seeing it as the confirmation of a presentiment, a 'certainty which filled all outlines' (832). Dorothea's impression is an apt illustration of Coleridge's belief in the role anticipation plays in perception: 'a likeness in part tends to become a likeness of the whole' (CCW, Coburn, IV, 118). And the comment 'a certainty which filled up all outlines' demonstrates Eliot's knowledge that during perception 'the text of the external world is not so much copied as

composed'.⁷ Dorothea's blindness in interpreting the 'signs' of the scene she has witnessed is again revealed by Celia, who remarks: '"Dodo, how very bright your eyes are!... And you don't see anything you look at, Arthur or anything"' (833). Celia's comments echo her remarks upon her disclosure of Sir James's attachment to Dorothea, and they indicate that Dorothea is deceived about Will as she was about Sir James.

The shock of the encounter triggers a clamorous collision in Dorothea, which culminates in a holistic perspective. Indeed Dorothea's introspection in Chapter LXXX contains the whole book in a terse version, as all the major images reach their full fruition. In this chapter the germinal image acquires its 'spatial saturation' and aesthetic integration is achieved through the reconciliation of opposites. At the same time, this aesthetic integration represents Dorothea's psychological integration, the resolution of conflicts into a harmonious whole. Dorothea's struggle towards integration acquires additional significance through allusions to King Solomon, who dreams of God asking him what he would like the Lord to give him before his famous judgement on the dispute about the child. To God's question Solomon responds: '"Give ... thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad', and the Lord endows him with 'understanding to discern judgment' and a 'wise and

⁷Merleau-Ponty, p. 9.

understanding heart'. Solomon wakes and realizes it was a dream and offers 'peace offerings' to God.⁸

Dorothea's collision is represented through 'two images--two living forms that tore her heart in two' and the intensity of the conflict is embodied by one of the most violent images in George Eliot's fiction--Solomon's order carried out: 'as if it had been the heart of a mother who seems to see her child divided by the sword, and presses one bleeding half to her breast while her gaze goes forth in agony towards the half which is carried away by the lying woman that has never known the mother's pang' (844). The two images are antithetical and are drawn with a series of contrasts which have already been explored throughout the book. We see light and darkness; freedom and restraint; outer and inner, 'the spirit of morning visiting the dim vault'; shrinking and expanding; systole and diastole, as she reaches out for Will and withdraws when he is a 'parting vision', or as 'the fire of Dorothea's anger was not easily spent, and it flamed out in fitful returns of spurning reproach' (845). Imagination indeed 'diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ... yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify' (BL, I, 202). Thus the hindrance becomes liberation as Dorothea wakes and the whole experience seems like a dream (like Solomon's dream), transfigured into a revelation: 'she felt as if her soul had been liberated from its terrible conflict;

⁸I, Kings 3, 5-28.

she was no longer wrestling with her grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts' (845).

At this moment Dorothea ceases to see the self as the whole or the centre of the web, but as a part of the whole or merely a filament of the web: 'The dominant spirit of justice within her' enables her to break away from 'the narrow cell of her calamity' and the image of Lydgate's ordeal moves her forward to expansion: 'All the active thought with which she had before been representing to herself the trials of Lydgate's lot ... all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance' (846). Through true seeing, 'representing to herself' someone else's troubles, Dorothea feels the other's pain, understands and acts; by means of her imagination she emerges triumphant over her self-pity and jealousy. And as she refuses to indulge in grief, seeking, instead, an answer to the question, 'How should I act now, this very day if I could clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of those three', Dorothea reaches the greatest vision a noble human being could possibly achieve. Her imagination and perception are no longer discordant, but for the first time we feel them serenely harmonious, as she breaks the dichotomy between the inward and outward perspectives by allowing the morning light to flood the dark room, thus

making possible the complete fusion of the exterior and the interior:

she opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving--perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining (846).

The ordinary, not something unique, becomes the focus of her vision. She must have certainly seen the gates and the fields beyond on innumerable occasions. But the emphasis here is on an unorthodox perspective, 'the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects' (BL, II, 12); and no doubt the effect of such a perspective is 'the constant accompaniment of mental, no less, than of bodily, convalescence' (BL, I, 60). By looking at the world from a new perspective, she creates a world; infuses life into it; and she is affected by her creation--experiencing 'mental no less bodily convalescence'. And here we can see the reconciling power of the imagination in its fullest extent. The external is made internal, 'the internal external ... nature thought, and thought nature' (BL, II, 258). Dorothea's creative vision involves 'the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions

of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation' (BL, II, 253).

The process becomes especially clear when we see how smoothly the image and the idea are reconciled. By looking at the external, the image of 'a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby' from a new perspective ('she was part of that involuntary, palpitating life'), she is at once involved in a creative act. Her act inspires the idea of helping Lydgate and Rosamond. This is then how the image is transformed into idea. But the idea has to become externalized again, to be embodied in a meaningful action. And here the comparison between Hamlet and Dorothea certainly ends. But like Shakespeare, Eliot wishes 'to impress upon us the truth, that action is the chief end of existence--that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from or render us repugnant to action, and lead us to think and think of doing until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually' (SC, II, 197). Indeed Coleridge's remarks on Hamlet could very well apply to Middlemarch.

Dorothea's generous act makes the idea incarnate. The transformation of the idea into the image or the image into the idea has to be incessant, otherwise there can be no growth, no progress. Dorothea's act, for instance, does not affect Rosamond and the image dies there, without triggering an idea. Rosamond in a way represents the unresponsive reader who is not affected by

the novel. Unless the novel, which is external, is internalized by the reader, by becoming meaningful in his own life, it remains coldly external, the author's feeling has not touched the reader's. This is why the image of the window is so powerfully effective. By looking from Dorothea's perspective, the frame disappears, the scene moves over the edges of the canvas on every side. From the near ('the entrance-gates'), to the distant ('the bending sky'), the scene moves on till it touches the reader's own life. The charm of the picture is not in its action but in its mood, calm and gentle and soothing and regenerating. Feeling, not action, and, it is hoped, the very feeling the author experienced while composing the novel, will touch the reader.

CHAPTER 5

CLOSING OUR EYES TO SEE

The carriage, leaving the walls of Rome behind, rolled through narrow lanes where the wild honeysuckle had begun to tangle itself in the hedges, or waited for her in quiet places where the fields lay near, while she strolled further and further over the flower-freckled turf, or sat on a stone that had once had a use and gazed through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene--at the dense, warm light, the far gradations and soft confusions of colour, the motionless shepherds in lonely attitudes, the hills where the cloud-shadows had the lightness of a blush (II, 328-29).

Systole and diastole, the self and the world, inward and outward--such is the palpitating rhythm of this scene, which seems but a transformation of the epiphany Dorothea reaches after the night of her meditative vigil.

Pathetic fallacy prevails here also as Isabel externalizes her sadness and mantles the scene in it, creating a painting which gradually and effectively removes the impenetrable plane of a canvas. As her eyes move from 'the gradations and soft confusions of light' to the 'motionless shepherds in lonely attitudes', the hills, and the cloud-shadows, the vistas become more and

more widened, endless till her eyes meet our eyes, till her sorrow touches our lives.

Unlike the scene which Dorothea sees as she draws the curtains, the picture here is not framed by a window; but at this point of the novel, after so many important images have been framed by windows or doorways, we have already been trained fairly well to frame pictures on our own. What is important here, however, is that Isabel's painting includes almost the same elements Dorothea's has: fields, the sky beyond, the light, the shepherds. Only the picture's 'caption' seems to change, becoming more indirect, compelling the reader to do more work. Instead of 'she was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining', the continuity between the self and the world is evoked more concisely, and the difference between the scene in Middlemarch and that in The Portrait of a Lady is almost the difference between a realistic and an impressionistic painting: 'gazed through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene'. And whereas the tone in Middlemarch seems somewhat didactic, in The Portrait we notice the greater moral indirection.

But there is another important difference between the two scenes. Unlike Dorothea, Isabel is not inspired by the image; that is, the image is not transformed into idea and eventually into action. The scene lacks the smooth continuity between image and idea present in

Dorothea's epiphany. Image and idea here stand apart; they are not yet reconciled. The internal, Isabel's 'personal sadness' becomes external, 'the splendid sadness of the scene', but it is not again internalized. The lack of continuity between image and idea depicts Isabel's moral development at this point in her life.

This scene, nevertheless, is only one of many others illustrating how beautifully images incubate in the artist's mind and flower when the opportunity arises. In fact, The Portrait of a Lady could be described as an artist's creative criticism of Middlemarch. James's objections to Middlemarch, in his critical essay in Galaxy (1873), could very well be regarded as his imagination's attempts to 'dissolve, diffuse, dissipate, in order to recreate'. With this in mind, we can see how The Portrait of a Lady completes, in James's view, what Middlemarch leaves incomplete.

If we disregard Dorothea, just for a moment, we could see how James describes very definitely, very succinctly his germ of Isabel Archer in his essay on Middlemarch: 'An ardent young girl was to have been the central figure, a young girl framed for a larger moral life than circumstance often affords yearning for a motive for sustained spiritual effort and only wasting her ardor and soiling her wings against the meanness of opportunity'.¹ Here we have the outline of Isabel's most

¹The Galaxy, XV, no. 3 (March 1873), 424-428. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

distinct characteristics: her ardour, her passion for a meaningful life guided by knowledge, truth and beauty are singular promises for 'sailing' and soaring beyond the vulgar, petty circumstances hampering common lives. Yet, like a tragic heroine, she is punished for her wish--she is 'ground in the mill of the conventional' (II, 415).

In The Portrait James seems to have rescued Dorothea whom he found 'too superb a heroine to be wasted'; furthermore, he seems to have met his own objection, namely, that 'she plays a narrower part than the imagination of the reader demands', and that 'she is of more consequence than the action of which she is the nominal centre' (426). Years later in his preface to The Portrait of a Lady, he took pains to assure the reader that Isabel was the actual, not the 'nominal centre' and in so doing he set forth some of the most important concepts of organic unity. Like Coleridge, who emphasized that Shakespeare's plots evolved from the main characters and that the protagonists only served as diffusive and receptive centres in his plays, James proudly declared that the germ of his idea for The Portrait was not a plot, 'nefarious name', but a young woman whose consciousness was to be the centre of his subject. But unlike Coleridge, who considered the mechanical and the organic as antithetical, James established their continuity by identifying Isabel with the 'large building' of the novel.

Dorothea was not the only character who seems to have inspired James. His description of Casaubon in the

same essay could also serve as an accurate portrayal of Osmond--'hollow pretentiousness and mouldy egotism'. Indeed, Casaubon's portrait seems to be the rough drawing of Osmond's : 'The whole portait of Mr Casaubon has an admirably sustained greyness of tone in which the shadows are never carried to the vulgar black of coarser artists. Every stroke contributes to the unwholesome, hopelessly sinister expression' (427-28). In fact, Osmond seems to be a combination of Casaubon and Ladislav, or rather, more precisely, the embodiment of James's primary objection to Ladislav: 'the impression once given that he is a dilettante is never properly removed, and there is slender poetic justice in Dorothea's marrying a dilettante (426). But is there poetic justice in Isabel's marrying a dilettante? Dorothea's opposite, Rosamond, also seems to be transformed into Isabel's opposite, Madame Merle. Although he enjoyed the portrayal of Rosamond, James objected to Eliot's insistence on 'her instincts of coquetry', which he called 'a discordant note' (427). In his portrayal of Madame Merle James has removed any coquetry, but like Eliot, he has attempted, as it were, to represent 'the fatality of British decorum' (427).

My main emphasis here is not to compare and contrast the two masterpieces, but rather to focus on some images which made such a strong impression on a great artist's mind that they were never forgotten, never lost but were recreated. The 'painful' fireside scenes between Lydgate and Rosamond, for instance, were, according to James,

'the most perfectly successful passages in the book.... There is nothing more powerfully real than these scenes in all English fiction, and nothing certainly more intelligent' (427). His own masterpiece seems to revolve around fireside scenes. Isabel's meditative vigil, for example, which he calls a 'landmark' in his preface, takes place by her dying fire, and Mr Touchett's final interview with his son is represented in his room 'lighted only by the flickering fire'. As in Middlemarch so in The Portrait of a Lady the interplay of light with darkness is the primary rhythm in the novel.

Early in his novel in his portrayal of Isabel, James favours the romantic terms Eliot used in her description of Dorothea, and he, like Eliot, outlines the qualities of an imaginative nature, underlining the fact that his novel is more than anything else a study of the imagination. Already in the 'Prelude' we become acquainted with Dorothea's ardent, St Theresa-like nature, which 'fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction'. Isabel is also possessed by a 'flame-like spirit' (69), which is often 'soaring' or 'sailing' (II, 70), longing for 'free expansion' 'irresistible action', preferably in the form of heroic events (68-9).

The comparisons between the two heroines are certainly endless, but to concentrate on only the points the two novels share would be to lose sight of each novel's uniqueness and individuality. It is very probable that Dorothea served as James's model, as it has

already been examined by other critics, but who can possibly ascertain the source, when an artist's 'wind-blown germs ... come from every quarter of heaven ... they are there at any turn of the road. They are the breath of life ... floated into our minds by the current of life' (viii). The belief, expressed in organic terms, echoes Coleridge's definition of genius in Biographia Literaria, which included the reciprocation between the external and the internal, an interplay which has been the core of organicism:

now so to place these images,
totalized, and fitted to the limits
of the human mind, as to elicit from,
and to superinduce upon, the forms
themselves the moral reflexions to
which they approximate, to make the
external internal, the internal
external, the make nature thought,
and thought nature,--this is the
mystery of genius in the Fine Arts
(BL, II, 258).

Isabel's very first picture in the novel displays the continuity between the internal and the external as she stands silently, unnoticed by Ralph, framed by 'the ample doorway' (16); she is neither inside nor outside as yet. This image is preceded by the exterior-interior dialectic in the description of Gardencourt, a house which itself displays human characteristics, since it has a 'magisterial physiognomy' and has been 'bruised' and 'defaced' in wars (5, 3). Internal becomes external and the demarcation line between the indoors and outdoors is very hazy, when we look at 'the wide carpet of turf that covered the level hill-top' and 'seemed but an extension of a luxurious interior' or at 'the great still oaks and

beeches' which 'flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains' (3-4). As the interior is lengthened out to meet the exterior, or the exterior takes on qualities of the interior, we become aware of the dynamic qualities of the images. Neither the lawn nor the 'great still oaks' remain static, but establish a rhythm to which Isabel is alive when she first enters the scene. Her perspective is constantly enlarged as her eyes move from the lawn to the 'reedy, silvery Thames', back to the 'beautiful old house' and 'while engaged in this survey she had made room in it for her companions' (20-21). Her 'clear perception' is dominated by her imagination, for immediately she finds the house 'enchanting' and, when she meets Lord Warburton, she spontaneously compares her situation to a fictional one, "'Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it's just like a novel!'" And then, "'Oh, you adorable creature!" she suddenly cried, stooping down and picking up the small dog again' (18). From Lord Warburton to Bunchie, the transition from imagination to perception is made as effortlessly as the mingling of the indoors with the outdoors; and, in the meantime, we become aware of the author's spellbinding 'power of so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose consciousness of words--to make him see everything--and this without exciting any painful or laborious attention' (SC, I, 214). Furthermore, the idea seems to become, in Eliot's terms, 'thoroughly incarnate', as Warburton, shortly after Isabel's entrance, tells Ralph,

'You wished a while ago to see my idea of an interesting woman. There it is!'" (24).

Perception is constantly modified by imagination especially when Isabel describes her impressions of Gardencourt. After seeing the pictures in the gallery, she asks Ralph whether there is a ghost: '"You do see them then? You ought to, in this romantic old house"'. Ralph's response to Isabel's description sounds much like Will's assertion that true seeing takes place within: '"It's not a romantic old house.... It's a dismally prosaic one; there's no romance here but what you may have brought with you"' (62).

By means of her imagination, Isabel sees Gardencourt in an unorthodox way, not from Ralph's 'prosaic' perspective. To her, Gardencourt 'seemed a picture made real'; and her imagination is linked to her taste in a Coleridgean sort of way: 'no refinement of the agreeable was lost upon Isabel; the rich perfection of Gardencourt at once revealed a world and gratified a need'. Here again diastole and systole take over and the interplay between the interior and the exterior continues; simultaneously, we see the qualities we should be looking for if we are to enjoy any picture--if, that is, we want to know what a picture made real means. The rhythm again in this description is a transformation of the initial movement--an interplay of the 'large, low rooms, with brown ceilings' with 'the deep greenness outside, that seemed always peeping in' (73). In and out, systole and diastole, seem to be the primary elements of an

imaginative view which is further amplified by Isabel's stay in her house at Albany, chronologically prior to her visit to Gardencourt.

Isabel's imaginative view of the house at Albany is superbly contrasted with her aunt's 'prosaic' perspective. To Ralph's inquiries about his as yet unknown cousin, Mrs Touchett responds, '"I found her in an old house at Albany, sitting in a dreary room on a rainy day, reading a heavy book and boring herself to death. She didn't know she was bored"' (56). Not knowing that one is bored, in turn, is another quality of an imaginative being, and is here contrasted implicitly with Warburton's boredom in the opening scene in the book. Though Mrs Touchett herself lacks imagination, she recognizes the fertilizing quality of Isabel's imagination; when she relates to Ralph her plan to show Europe to her niece, Ralph objects, '"That sounds rather dry--even allowing her the choice of two of the countries"'. '"If it's dry"', Mrs Touchett responds, 'you can leave Isabel alone to water it! She is as good as summer rain, any day"' (55).

Undoubtedly, Isabel's house at Albany reveals the primary qualities of her imagination and meets James's description of the germ of the novel in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady: 'It came to be a square and spacious house--or has at least seemed so to me in this going over it again; but, such as it is, it had to be put up round my young woman while she stood there in perfect isolation' (xii). The Albany house is both spacious and

square, described as 'a large, square, double house' (27), and it qualifies as the germ, since Isabel in her office is certainly in 'perfect isolation'. Her office in this house is a room considered by others as 'a chamber of disgrace for old pieces whose infirmities were not always apparent (so that the disgrace seemed unmerited and rendered them victims of injustice)'. In this room, however, Isabel, like Dorothea in her blue boudoir, does not feel alienated since she had 'established relations almost human' with the old furniture, and 'she had confided a hundred childish sorrows' to an old sofa (30). Her imagination then is 'essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead' (BL, I, 202).

Imagination is further linked to the curiosity for knowledge and the desire for independence and liberty. Isabel's constant visits to the house library and her climbing on chairs to reach books in high shelves remind us of Lydgate's similar pursuit. Her refusal to attend school in the Dutch House across the street also establishes her independence and desire for freedom, simultaneously fusing liberty with exclusion, a theme to be developed later on in the novel: 'When the windows of the Dutch house were open, she used to hear the hum of childish voices repeating the multiplication-table--an incident in which the elation of liberty and the pain of exclusion were indistinguishably mingled' (29).

Isabel prefers isolation and independence, since she seems to recognize them as the conditions which inspire

the imagination. But her office, and the way it is structured, encourages the flights of her imagination at the expense of her perception. The actual entry to her office is the second door of the house which had been condemned and was bolted; Isabel knows that this door opened to the street:

if the sidelights had not been filled with green paper she might have looked out upon the little brown stoop and the well-known brick pavement. But she had no wish to look out, for this would have interfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side--a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror' (30).

Perception and imagination come in conflict here and are manifested in physical terms in Isabel's refusal to look outside by opening the door or removing the green sidelights: 'she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond' (31). When her aunt Lydia finds her in her office, 'a crude, cold rain fell heavily' but Isabel ignores the outdoors, for she 'gave as little heed as possible to cosmic treacheries' (31). Isabel's imagination flourishes at the expense of her perception and the primary conflict in her character resembles that of Dorothea's. The polarity between the internal and the external, perception and imagination occurs in a later passage depicting even more precisely the collision within Isabel's character, 'the fundamental contrast', which George Eliot considered to be embodied by the germ of an organic work: 'Her imagination was by

habit ridiculously active; when the door was not open it jumped out of the window. She was not accustomed indeed to keep it behind bolts; and at important moments, when she would have been thankful to make use of her judgement alone, she paid the penalty of having given undue encouragement to the faculty of seeing without judging' (42). This image is apparently significant because it develops the germ more fully and exposes an interplay between the exterior and the interior even in terms of Isabel's imagination. Doors and windows become interwoven with the imagination, and perception is defined more precisely as judgement. At the same time, imagination is identified with the outdoors, and judgement with the indoors. Since, as we have seen, a creative act, according to Coleridge, as well as James and Eliot, is possible only through a fusion of imagination and will or judgement, Isabel, at this point, seems to be unable to view life from a creative perspective. Imagination in The Portrait does partake of the qualities of the same power in Middlemarch, does involve a projection of the self into others, but the emphasis is different. James seems to be intent on cultivating in the reader a creative perspective on life. His means of achieving this are multifarious. Isabel's journey, like Dorothea's, leads to reconciliation of imagination and perception (or judgement). If this reconciliation is prerequisite to a creative act, then anyone can lead a creative life by adopting such a perspective. At the same time, Isabel's life proves the

fusion of the aesthetic and the moral, and illustrates how morality and aesthetics meet. Contrasted with Isabel's aesthetic, moral, and psychological integration, is Osmond's aesthetic view of life which comes into conflict with morality. Unless art touches life, it is as meaningless as the treasures of a museum which are kept away from any spectators.

Whereas Isabel in the doorway shows the physical proximity of the exterior and the interior, the apparent continuity between the house and the garden, the images in her office illustrate the polarity between the indoors and the outdoors. This image displays the fundamental characteristics of the germ, which Coleridge and George Eliot described: it is at the beginning of a work and reveals an opposition within the main character's personality. And since the germ embodies opposites, the novel naturally grows through opposites, whether these are characters, events, or images.

But why windows? why doorways? One cannot leave either Middlemarch or The Portrait without a vivid memory of either Dorothea at a window or Isabel at a door. Both windows and doors seem to serve numerous marvelous functions. To begin with, the internal/external interplay is smoothly achieved through them. Besides, we can identify with a character better if we are spectators of an event, watching, like a character, from a window. As the character becomes the beholder of events, he is instantly identified with the reader, who is also a beholder of events taking place in the novel. A doorway

also becomes a beautiful frame for the character standing under it, as in the case of Isabel's first appearance.

But most importantly doors and windows make the image three-dimensional, add the depth dimension, cultivate our imagination's penetrative ability. Throughout this novel, as well as in his other novels, James takes pains to show that image is picture and picture is three-dimensional. On numerous occasions, James associates directly doors and windows with the depth dimension. In his preface to Princess Casamassima, for instance, opening a door means entering imaginatively: 'to haunt the great city and by habit to penetrate it imaginatively in as many places as possible--that was to be informed, that was to pull wires, that was to open doors' (AN, 77). The penetrative quality of the imagination, as we have seen, is also connected to its projective power, the projection into something or into someone else. Besides, 'the novelist is a particular window' whose work fails when 'the showing and giving simply don't come off--the reader never touches the subject and the subject never touches the reader; the window is no window at all--but only childish finta' (HJL, I, 165).

Hence the inner-outer interplay. Systole and diastole is the key rhythm to viewing the image; systole allows us to be locked within the frame, diastole enables us to move out. Once we ask what it is like to be there, we activate our imaginations to push the frame outward till the picture touches our lives; once we ask what is

behind the doorway, and then behind, and again, we keep on extending the spatial and the temporal dimensions of the image till it touches our lives--'hinged doors opening straight upon life' (x). We can see then one of the most important differences between perception and imagination. While they both are synthetic and both involve systole and diastole, imagination is more diastolic than systolic. The systole-diastole rhythm--what Lydgate defines as 'the expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object glass'--is the pervading rhythm in The Portrait. Other manifestations of the same rhythm are soaring and sinking, height and depth, in and out.

James simplifies at a stroke the debate over images vs pictures, by such phrases as 'her uncle's house seemed a picture made real', or 'the peculiarly English picture I have attempted to sketch' (2), or Isabel in 'the ample doorway'. He would very probably have agreed with Bachelard that images are not 'mere metaphors' (PS, xxxv), but are, rather, pictures that can be projected and viewed. Describing Isabel's memories of her travels in Europe, the narrator speaks about images and pictures interchangeably: 'These pictures would have been both landscapes and figure-pieces; the latter, however, would have been the more numerous. With several of the images that might have been projected on such a field we are already acquainted' (II, 32).

Again referring to memories, James gives us guidelines for the composition of pictures. Since

ultimately the images of a book move from imagination to memory, we can understand the emphasis on images of memory. Here, for example, Isabel is reminiscing about Ralph's warning against Osmond: 'It lived before her again--it never had time to die--that morning in the garden at Florence when he had warned her against Osmond. She had only to close her eyes to see the place, to hear his voice, to feel the warm, sweet air. How could he have known?' (II, 203-4). The beginning of the passage seems to be an exquisite example of Bachelard's assertion that images should be lived directly--'it lived before her again'; simultaneously, it exhibits the synesthetic quality of the image and its multidimensional make-up, involving space, time, sounds, temperature, sensations; furthermore, the scene reveals the significance of silence--it is the key to composition. Passiveness here seems, in Coleridge's words, to 'attain the dignity of worthy activity'.

Besides, the emphasis on the novel-within-the novel is also here subtly explained--it is an added dimension like the windows and the doorways, a way to effect the fusion of the fictional with the real world. If Isabel herself is reading a novel, she can give us guidelines for reading one. We often need to stop, and close our eyes, and see the place, and hear her voice, and feel the sweet air. And if we see, and feel, we can understand--'How could he have known?' More precisely, Isabel's images seem to illustrate Iser's distinction between perceiving and imaging, or rather the quality imaging has

but perceiving lacks: 'Unlike perceiving, which requires the presence of objects, imaging depends upon their absence and brings to life aspects which could not have emerged through direct perception of the objects'.²

In his portrayal of his main characters, James, like Eliot, seems to follow the techniques of Natural Idealism, a theory congruent with organicism and its emphasis on opposites. Indeed, inferior figures highlight superior ones. Isabel's portrait stands out in relief from the others. As Dorothea's character is delineated by her interactions with her opposites, Rosamond and Celia, so Isabel's portrait is painted with colours opposite to those used for her opposites, Madame Merle and Henrietta. Indeed Henrietta seems but a transformation of Celia, or rather, her liberated version, constantly reminding Isabel of the real world which she tends to ignore. Isabel's definition of happiness as 'a swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see' (235) appals Henrietta, whose perception dominates over her imagination. Unlike everyone else, she does not congratulate her friend on the bequest because she sees money as a 'curse in disguise', bricks which Isabel will use to build her castles in the air. Like Celia, who accurately describes Dorothea's imperceptiveness ('"you always see what nobody sees ... yet you never see what is

²The Act of Reading, p. 137.

quite plain'"), Henrietta unmistakably diagnoses Isabel's problem:

The peril for you is that you live too much in the world of your own dreams. You're not enough in contact with reality--with the toiling, striving, suffering, I may even say sinning, world that surrounds you. You're too fastidious; you've too many graceful illusions. Your newly-acquired thousands will shut you up more and more to the society of a few selfish and heartless people who will be interested in keeping them up (310).

Henrietta's description coincides with Isabel's isolation in her office in the Albany house, where 'she spent half her time in thinking of beauty and bravery and magnanimity' and preferred 'to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion' (68). Her love for Isabel, it seems, enables her to be perceptive about her friend's paradoxical nature.

But like Celia, Henrietta lacks a sense of wonder, the receptivity which, as we have seen, is essential to knowledge, growth, and imagination, for 'she had clear-cut views on most subjects' and before she even comes to Europe, she 'knew perfectly in advance what her opinions would be' (70). Lacking a systolic-diastolic perspective, the quality of the penetrative imagination, Henrietta is not framed by doors or windows; in fact, Isabel admits to Ralph, '"she doesn't sufficiently recognise the existence of knockers ... she thinks one's door should stand ajar' (129). There is no inner-outer interplay in Henrietta, and this is why she is never identified with houses. Even when she is briefly

associated with windows, the comparison lacks any depth: 'her remarkably open eyes, lighted like great glazed railway-stations, had put up no shutters' (II, 382).

For the same reason, the allusions to Henrietta's search for 'the inner life' of England are ironic, as she initially believes that she can discover it in Mrs Pensil's household (236); but when the desired invitation from Mrs Pensil never comes, Henrietta has to give up her hope to see inner life in England and moves on to the Continent, where she is much happier, since 'on the Continent there was the outer life, which was palpable and visible at every turn, and more easily convertible to literary uses than the customs of those opaque islanders'. Inner and outer become entangled in Henrietta's imperceptive view: 'Out of doors in foreign lands, as she ingeniously remarked, one seemed to see the right side of the tapestry; out of doors in England one seemed to see the wrong side, which gave one no notion of the figure' (407). Even Isabel, when she hears about Henrietta's impending marriage to Mr Bantling, cannot help remarking, '"You will at last--over here--see something of the inner life.'" (II, 400).

Mrs Touchett, Madame Merle, Osmond, Ralph--all these characters' responses to Henrietta's loudness and aggressiveness are contrasted with Isabel's; she can see what others disregard, somewhat illustrating James's point about the artist's 'individual vision': 'He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where

the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine' (xi). To Ralph's objection that Henrietta is too familiar, Isabel responds imaginatively, regarding Henrietta from a suggestive viewpoint: '"she's a kind of emanation of the great democracy--of the continent, the country, the nation. I don't say that she sums it all up.... But she suggests it; she vividly figures it"'. Isabel's view of Henrietta illustrates the imagination's power to see something as something else, its tendency to idealize, its expansive, diastolic essence: '"I like the great country stretching away beyond the rivers and across the prairies, blooming and smiling and spreading till it stops at the green Pacific! A strong, sweet, fresh odour seems to rise from it, and Henrietta--pardon my simile--has something of that odour in her garments"' Ralph's humorous comment keys down what would otherwise seem exaggerated: '"I'm not sure the Pacific's so green as that.... Henrietta, however, does smell of the Future--it almost knocks one down!"' (129-30).

As the novel progresses, Isabel's respect for Henrietta is fully justified, especially when Henrietta crosses 'the stormy ocean in mid-winter because she had guessed that Isabel was sad' (II, 283), or when she accompanies Ralph in his final journey from Rome to England. Most importantly, Henrietta, like Caspar Goodwood, stands out not so much in contrast to Isabel as to Madame Merle and Osmond, essentially because she is 'deficient in the social drapery commonly muffling, in an

overcivilized age, the sharpness of human contacts' (II, 280).

Madame Merle's social drapery is so abundant that it transforms Isabel's life into a 'masque with enigmatical costumes'. One cannot help but see her as Rosamond's transformation, 'a public performer, condemned to emerge only in character and in costume' (II, 39). Intensely aware of the social dynamics, she is 'completely equipped for the social battle. She carried her flag discreetly, but her weapons were polished steel' and made herself a 'firm surface, a sort of corselet of silver' (II, 154-55). Her discretion in concealing her weapons is so effective that even Mrs Touchett cannot perceive below 'the firm surface' and considers her complete and perfect, a perfection which Madame Merle defines as her willingness to observe and abide by the rules of English decorum: '"I mean that having no faults, for your aunt, means that one's never late for dinner--that is for her dinner.... It means that one answers a letter the day one gets it and that when one comes to stay with her one doesn't bring too much luggage and is careful not to be taken ill. For Mrs Touchett those things constitute virtue"' (278). Accomplished in the social graces, music, painting, finesse, she is welcome by everyone, and like Rosamond (an 'exquisite ornament'), she is an 'ornament to any circle' (II, 156).

Music is the medium that seems to charm Isabel's imagination upon her first acquaintance with Madame Merle. She, like Dorothea (who often hears music before

she sees Rosamond), hears music before she actually meets Madame Merle; her imagination, that is, is already captured before her perception has a chance to take over. James's focusing in this case resembles that of an experienced cinematographer as he alternates from Isabel framed by the door of the drawing-room to Madame Merle playing the piano at the end of the room furthest removed from the door. As her back is turned to Isabel, she does not notice her, thus allowing Isabel to admire her skillful and emotional performance, before 'the new-comer stopped with her hands on the keys, half-turning and looking over her shoulder' (246).

Madame Merle's momentary unawareness of Isabel's entrance foreshadows another critical image in the novel when Isabel comes home from a walk to find Madame Merle with Osmond. Madame Merle's advent is here also contrasted with Isabel's first appearance in Gardencourt, which took place on a beautiful, warm summer-day against the harmonious interplay of the exterior and interior of Gardencourt. Madame Merle's coming is, on the other hand, full of negative omens, since it coincides with Mr Touchett's impending death and the rain, which Isabel sees through the window, 'washing the cold-looking lawn and the wind shaking the great trees' (246). But Isabel, at this point, as in the germinal scene, gives 'as little heed as possible to cosmic treacheries' and greets Madame Merle's arrival with happy eagerness, anticipating that the new guest may play an important role in her life. Her romantic expectation is ironic, since she does

discover at the end that Madame Merle has been indeed 'a powerful agent in her destiny' (II, 322). While Isabel's imagination is 'dazzled' (271), her judgement is caught off guard and Madame Merle seems to be the incarnation of the 'penalty' Isabel must pay of giving 'undue encouragement to the faculty of seeing without judging'.

In her response to Madame Merle, Isabel resembles Lydgate in his misjudging of Rosamond. Her beautiful surface, her 'expressive communicative, responsive face' cannot possibly be, in Isabel's view, 'of the sort which ... suggested a secretive disposition'. By seeing her 'as if she were a Bust ... a Juno or a Niobe' (249), Isabel swiftly removes Madame Merle into the realm of the imaginative and refuses to judge her in any negative way. Isabel's initial positive impression of Madame Merle serves as the germ of her subsequent responses to her captivating friend; it seems to take over and Isabel has difficulty controlling it. This is perhaps why even when she finds Madame Merle 'too flexible, too useful ... too ripe and too final' with 'her angles too much rubbed away' by custom, she disregards her own misgivings and hopes that 'a charming surface doesn't necessarily prove one superficial.... She was deep' (273-74). Like Dorothea, who looks into Mr Casaubon's soul, Isabel, in her search of depth, disregards the surface.

A beautiful surface is what Madame Merle capitalizes on; indeed, her definition of one's self crystallizes her preoccupation with appearances: '"What shall we call our

'self'?.... It overflows into everything that belongs to us.... I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things! One's self--for other people--is one's expression of one's self, and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps--these things are all expressive"' (287-88). Isabel's expansive outlook is contrasted with Madame Merle's as she objects to her friend's definition: '"Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one.... My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with it's not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society"' (288).

Captivated by Madame Merle's 'exterior', Isabel confides in her and begins to trust her as she never did anyone else before: 'The gates of the girl's confidence were opened wider than they had ever been; she said things to this amiable auditress that she had not yet said to any one. Sometimes she took alarm at her candour: it was as if she had given to a comparative stranger the key to her cabinet of jewels' (267). The presence of gates here is necessary to emphasize the inner-outer interplay characteristic of Isabel but lacking in her friend. At the same time we can see how Dorothea's jewels, which make her think of 'spiritual emblems', are here transformed into internal treasures, 'spiritual gems', which 'were the only ones of any

magnitude that Isabel possessed, but there was all the greater reason for their being carefully guarded' (267).

Like Rosamond, who cannot imagine other people's states of mind except 'as a material cut into shape by her own wishes', Madame Merle lacks the ability to see the distant and the imperceptible, to penetrate beneath the surface, to project herself into others. Her disappointment with Pansy's failure to captivate Lord Warburton demonstrates what George Eliot termed Rosamond's 'realistic imagination': '"I had set my heart on that marriage; the idea did what so few things do--it satisfied the imagination"'. Isabel's remark, on the other hand, brings forth the diastolic part of the imagination, which Madame Merle's lacks: '"Your imagination, yes. But not that of the persons concerned"' (II, 324).

Madame Merle's preoccupation with the external is also revealed in her final interview with Isabel at the convent, when she discloses Ralph's role in providing Isabel's inheritance. Here we have a perverse transformation of the 'spiritual gems' Isabel had entrusted to Madame Merle: '"He imparted to you that extra lustre which was required to make you a brilliant match' (II, 388). Yet Madame Merle's baseness highlights Isabel's nobleness, and this is why Isabel's picture in the convent is framed both by a window and a door. Like Dorothea, who in moments of intense introspection has no awareness of the external world, Isabel at the time does not see what she looks at: 'On the other side of the

window lay the garden of the convent; but this is not what she saw; she saw nothing of the budding plants and the glowing afternoon. She saw, in the crude light of that revelation which had already become a part of experience ... the dry straining fact that she had been an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron' (II, 379). The intensity of the inner vision blurs the externals, and Isabel's reaction to her recognition of the perverse fate of her spiritual gems ('an applied handled hung-up tool') resembles Dorothea's reaction to Casaubon's rejection of her affection; 'But the struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself' (464). Although there is no 'resolved submission' here, arrested violence is the essence of Isabel's revenge: 'There was a moment during which, if she had turned and spoken, she would have said something that would hiss like a lash. But she closed her eyes, and then the hideous vision dropped.... Isabel's only revenge was to be silent still--to leave Madame Merle in this unprecedented situation.... Isabel would never accuse her, never reproach her; perhaps because she never would give her the opportunity to defend herself' (II, 379-80). Her hand on the latch (reminding us of the bolts of her imagination), she seems in full possession of her judgement when she opens the

door and she responds to Madame Merle's disclosure: "'I believed it was you I had to thank!'" (389). Again she is framed by a door at this critical point when she has seen beneath Madame Merle's surface and has finally judged her.

Like a tragic heroine, Isabel (resembling Lydgate), gains knowledge by means of suffering, and part of that knowledge is her recognition that she can learn from those she has considered her inferior. When she first perceives Madame Merle's trap, Isabel thinks of her aunt, Mrs Touchett, who 'had made this discovery long before, and had mentioned it to her niece; but Isabel had flattered herself at this time that she had a much richer view of things, especially of the spontaneity of her own career, and the nobleness of her own interpretations, than poor stiffly-reasoning Mrs Touchett' (II, 329).

Madame Merle's lack of imagination is associated with her lack of strong feelings, since feeling is the primary quality of the imagination. Like Rosamond, who congratulates herself on her civilized responses in her confrontations with either her husband or her brother, Madame Merle is 'a woman of strong impulses kept in admirable order', a characteristic which Isabel mistakes as an 'ideal combination' (250). Her analogy of emotional experiences to the chips on a cup serves as the germ of her own character, a shallow, impaired nature: "'I flatter myself that I'm rather stout, but if I must tell you the truth I've been shockingly chipped and cracked. I do very well for service yet, because I've

been cleverly mended; and I try to remain in the cupboard--the quiet, dusky cupboard where there's an odour of stale spices--as much as I can. But when I've to come out and into a strong light--then, my dear, I'm a horror!"' (275). This image prefigures the other cup in Madame Merle's apartment which she believes to be a 'precious object' but which, so Osmond tells her, is worthless since it has a crack.

Like other characters in the novel, Madame Merle is represented by the house she lives in, especially since she herself has declared that one's possessions represent one's self. We are led to think of her in terms of her little salon where she receives her guests and displays her treasures--'small and densely filled with furniture; it gave an impression of faded silk and little statuettes which might totter if one moved' (II, 91). But there is no interplay between the external and the internal in her house, no windows or doors framing Madame Merle, because her character, like Rosamond's lacks any collisions, any intense feeling, the systolic-diastolic movement essential to an imaginative perspective.

Like Madame Merle, Lord Warburton appeals immediately to Isabel's imagination even though she watches him from a distance, even though she has not met him at the moment: '"Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it's just like a novel"' (18). Her first impression of him is so powerful that it becomes the germ, as it were, of her later regard of him and it is not modified by her subsequent encounters with him. When he stays in

Gardencourt, for instance, and she has a chance to know him better, she still sees him as 'a hero of romance' (91). Lord Warburton's house has a similar appeal to her imagination: 'it seemed to her a matter of course that it should be a noble picture'. But it is not the interior of the house which had been modernized and had lost some of its 'purity' that inspires her as much as the exterior: 'as they saw it from the gardens, a stout grey pile, of the softest, deepest, most weather-fretted hue rising from a broad, still moat, it affected the young visitor as a castle in a legend' (108). Again we can see here a manifestation of the germinal image. Since her imagination is inspired by the outdoors, by what lies outside her window, it is no wonder that in this case also it is enthralled by the externals--Warburton's appearance and the exterior of his house.

Isabel's impressions of Lockleigh, like her thoughts about Warburton at this time, do not involve an inner-outer interplay, but are rather the result of external observations. Her attraction to Lord Warburton's external appearance is reflected in the comments regarding him and are but a manifestation of her first impressions: 'His smile was peculiarly friendly and pleasing, and his whole person seemed to emit that radiance of good-feeling and good fare which had formed the charm of the girl's first impression of him. It surrounded him like a zone of fine June weather' (142). And later on, when Lord Warburton proposes to her, Isabel still attributes to him qualities of the outdoors: 'These

words were uttered with a breadth of candour that was like the embrace of strong arms--that was like the fragrance straight in her face, and by his clean, breathing lips, of she knew not what strange gardens, what charged airs' (152). Since Warburton excites her imagination, fond as it is of externals, it is inevitable that Isabel should consider him in terms of the external world. Warburton himself becomes aware of Isabel's preoccupation with the 'exterior' rather than with the 'interior'. Very early in their acquaintance, when Isabel exposes her theories about England, Warburton remarks, '"You judge only from the outside"' (112).

When Lord Warburton proposes to her, however, Isabel is conscious of the effect her 'undisciplined' imagination has upon her, and the penalty she would have to pay if she had given 'undue encouragement' to the faculty of 'seeing without judging'. Her enthusiasm and excitement for Lord Warburton do not overwhelm her altogether, and 'though she was lost in admiration of her opportunity, she managed to move back into the deepest shade of it, even as some wild, caught creature in a vast cage' (152-53). Unlike Dorothea, she recognizes that her fascination for the 'exterior' (her imagination) can transfer her to 'vast worlds'; but these worlds can, paradoxically, be confining, and can offer her, instead of the liberty which she seeks, the enslavement and entrapment of a cage. Aware of her flaw, her uncontrolled imagination, she retreats to her judgement

(her interior), the 'deepest shade', refusing to let her imagination lead her to a 'strange unseen place'.

Lord Warburton, however, appeals to her judgement also. Although a marriage with him would restrict the liberty which she values so highly, it would also offer her a sense of security. As she is going away from Lockleigh, while greeting Miss Molyneux, she looks into 'her quiet eyes a moment, and for that moment seemed to see in their grey depths the reflexion of everything she had rejected in rejecting Lord Warburton--the peace, the kindness, the honour, the possessions, a deep security and a great exclusion' (189). The last three qualities are those we usually attribute to comfortable houses. As in the germinal image, so in this passage, liberty and exclusion are 'indistinguishably mingled'. For the sake of her independence, Isabel must give up the exclusion she could have cherished by Lord Warburton's side.

Indeed, throughout the book, Isabel associates Lord Warburton with houses. Initially, she is charmed with Lockleigh and when she rejects his proposal, she mentions his houses: 'I am not, I am really and truly not, able to regard you in the light of a companion for life; or to think of your home--your various homes--as the settled seat of my existence"' (166). Again, later on, when she meets him in Rome accidentally, she concentrates on his appearance, 'his bronzed complexion', 'his multitudinous beard', 'his manly figure', and she reflects that she 'was glad she had always liked him. He had kept, evidently in spite of shocks, every one of his merits--

properties these partaking of the essence of great decent houses, as one might put it; resembling their innermost fixtures and ornaments, not subject to vulgar shifing and removable only by some whole break-up' (417-18). And when the possibility of Pansy's marriage to him arises, she cherishes for a while the idea of 'Pansy's becoming the wife of the master of the beautiful Lockleigh' (II, 173). Like Madame Merle then, Lord Warburton is the house in which he lives.

In her relationship with him, Isabel is caught within the conflict present in the germinal image. 'Exterior' and 'interior', imagination and judgement, are 'indistinguishably mingled' in her thoughts about Lord Warburton. Why does she reject him then? It is obvious that Lord Warburton represents a threat to her 'free exploration of life' (155). Simultaneously, in his early conversations with her, he irritates her in much the same way as Sir James annoyed Dorothea with his imperceptiveness or with his tendency to agree with her even when she contradicted him. Lord Warburton exhibits a similar lack of imagination when he describes 'the peculiarities of English life' to Isabel, and she finds herself 'amused at his explicitness and at the small allowance he seemed to make either for her own experience or for her imagination. "He thinks I'm a barbarian", she said "and that I've never seen forks and spoons"; and she used to ask him artless questions for the pleasure of hearing him answer seriously' (96). Both Isabel and Dorothea feel superior to their suitors only to be

startled later at their own imperceptiveness. Like Dorothea, who is blind to Sir James's intentions, Isabel shows similar lack of insight when she believes that Lord Warburton is no longer attached to her and wants to marry Pansy because he is truly in love with her.

Caspar Goodwood is Lord Warburton's opposite; the son of a self-made American, who made his fortune in the cotton-mills industry, he has nothing to do with aristocracy. And although he was a student at Harvard, he was famous in that school 'rather as a gymnast and an oarsman than as a gleamer of more dispersed knowledge' (163). Like his father, Goodwood owns a cotton-mill factory, which leaves Isabel's 'imagination absolutely cold' (165); unlike Lord Warburton, Goodwood does not at all appeal to her imagination, does not meet her 'exterior' standards. She wishes, for instance, that he looked a little differently: 'His jaw was too square and set and his figure too straight and stiff'. His way of dressing also irritates Isabel, since it reflects lack of imagination: 'it was not apparently that he wore the same clothes continually, for, on the contrary, his garments had a way of looking rather too new. But they all seemed of the same piece; the figure, the stuff, was so drearily usual'. Although she regards her own criticism rather superficial, she admits that it would be 'frivolous only if she were in love with him' (165). But Goodwood 'had never corresponded to her idea of a delightful person and she supposed that this was why he left her so harshly critical' (166).

Like Warburton, Goodwood is judged from outside and he also constitutes a threat to her freedom and independence. And though Goodwood 'never supposed she hadn't wings and the need of beautiful free movements', and reassures her that he will not 'curtail' her liberty (228), Isabel never ceases to believe that he wants 'to deprive her of her sense of freedom. There was a disagreeably strong push, a kind of hardness of presence, in his way of rising before her' (162). Even when he looks tenderly at her, Isabel regards him as an oppressor; his eyes, she feels 'seemed to shine through the vizard of a helmet' (218) and his love-confession makes her think only of hardness and coldness: 'she came back ... to her old sense that he was naturally plated and steeled, and armed essentially for aggression' (219-20). Ironically, Goodwood is himself aware of his own hardness but does not see the intense dislike Isabel has of it; in his interview with her in Florence, after Isabel has informed him about her engagement, he asserts, '"I'm selfish as iron"' (II, 51); and during his final critical encounter with her at Gardencourt he tries to recommend himself to her with the unfortunate words, '"Here I stand; I'm as firm as a rock"' (II, 434).

Unknowingly, when he describes the sense of suffocation he experiences in European trains, he seems to describe Isabel's stifling feeling around him: 'He hated the European railway-carriages, in which one sat for hours in a vise, knee to knee and nose to nose with a foreigner ... with all the added vehemence of one's wish

to have the window open' (II, 243). It is as if to relieve her sense of suffocation that Isabel turns to a window when she meets him unexpectedly at Pratt's Hotel in London (225), or when he comes to see her in Palazzo Crescentini (II, 49).

Again when she hears of Goodwood's visit to Europe after her marriage to Osmond, Isabel feels threatened by his impending appearance and reminisces about her last meeting with him in terms of conflict and violence:

He had left her that morning with a sense of the most superfluous of shocks; it was like a collision between vessels in broad daylight. There had been no mist, no hidden current to excuse it, and she herself had only wished to steer wide. He had bumped against her prow, however, while her hand was on the tiller, and--to complete the metaphor--had given the lighter vessel a strain which still occasionally betrayed itself in a faint creaking.... He had not been violent, and yet there had been a violence in the impression. There had been a violence at any rate in something somewhere' (II, 279).

Isabel's revival of the scene in Florence in imaginative terms illustrates Bachelard's assertion that 'the imagination ceaselessly revives and illustrates the memory'. The meeting itself had been quite prosaic, but her imagination seems to colour 'the paintings it wants to see again' (PS, 20, 105). Simultaneously, we can see that metaphors are the colours the imagination uses in translating or verbalizing entangling emotions. Isabel continues to regard Goodwood in violent terms, as we

shall later see, even when he offers to deliver her from Osmond's imprisonment.

Goodwood's greatest shortcoming, his lack of imagination, is revealed in, what he believes will be, his last meeting with Isabel. At the same time, the scene illustrates how imagination depends on clear perception and how anticipation can blur perception: 'Now that he was alone with her all the passion he had never stifled surged into his senses; it hummed in his eyes and made things swim round him. The bright, empty room grew dim and blurred, and through the heaving veil he felt her hover before him with gleaming eyes and parted lips'. Yet, we are told, 'if he had seen more distinctly he would have perceived her smile was fixed and a trifle forced--that she was frightened at what she saw in his own face' (II, 317). His exclamation, '"I can't penetrate you!"' (II, 318), demonstrates Goodwood's lack of a clear perception and a penetrative imagination, attributes which Isabel believes she had discovered when she meets Osmond.

In her view, Osmond seems to represent a happy synthesis of the qualities Goodwood and Warburton lack. It is significant that Isabel meets Osmond in Italy, in Florence, when her imagination is already sent soaring by her daily visits to museums and ancient places, and even by her stay in Palazzo Crescentini. Her life in Italy, as well as her encounters and disappointments with Osmond, represent all the qualities of the imagination to the exploration of which this study has been devoted.

At the beginning of her stay in Florence, Isabel, like Dorothea, seems to be overcome by 'all those acts of mental prostration'--'she went to the galleries and palaces; she looked at the pictures and statues that had hitherto been great names to her'. But unlike Dorothea, she is not burdened by personal problems yet and can respond spontaneously, emotionally, to everything she sees: 'she felt her heart beat in the presence of immortal genius and knew the sweetness of rising tears in eyes to which faded fresco and darkened marble grew dim' (354). The passage seems to illustrate Ruskin's generalization that imagination 'is based upon, and appeals to, a deep heart feeling' (MP, II, 298). At that time Mrs Touchett's palazzo inspires Isabel's imagination too: 'But the return, every day, was even plesanter than the going forth; the return into the wide, monumental court of the great house ... and into the high, cool rooms where the carved rafters and pompous frescoes of the sixteenth century looked down on the familiar commodities of the age of advertisement' (354-55). As in Gardencourt so in Palazzo Crescentini there is a harmonious interchange between the indoors and outdoors, an interplay to which Isabel's imagination is keenly responsive: 'the brightness of a garden where nature itself looked as archaic as the rugged architecture of the palace and which cleared and scented the rooms.... To live in such a place was, for Isabel, to hold to her ear all day a shell of the sea of the

past. This vague eternal rumour kept her imagination awake' (355).

In these surroundings, under these circumstances, Osmond's first visit to Isabel takes place, and it is no wonder that his presence affects Isabel's already stimulated imagination. Her meeting with Osmond is also a case in point of perception modified by anticipation. Quite clearly, Madame Merle's description of Osmond as a 'demoralized prince in exile' has already fired Isabel's imagination. Consequently, her reaction to him is full of projections, allowing a free rein to her imagination, while holding her perception in check. Dismissing her perception that Osmond's conversation with Madame Merle had 'the rich readiness that would have come from rehearsal', she adopts the attitude of a spectator of a play, or rather of a beholder of a fine work of art. Very soon she judges that 'his face, his head, was sensitive; he was not handsome, but he was fine, as fine as one of the drawings in the long gallery above the bridge of the Uffizi' (355-6). Her response to Osmond is very similar to her initial impression of Madame Merle; like Madame Merle, he is seen as a work of art and is then swiftly removed from the perceptual into the imaginative realm. Without knowing it, unfortunately, Ralph stimulates even further Isabel's imagination, establishing a connection between Isabel and Osmond when he offers her the information she wants: '"He's a vague, unexplained American ... he may be a prince in disguise.... He used to live in Rome Rome has grown

vulgar.... He has a great dread of vulgarity' (358). Ralph does not realize that vagueness inspires Isabel's imagination ('the vague eternal rumour kept her imagination awake') and that vulgarity is also what Isabel dreads, as we have seen in the germinal image: 'She had never opened the bolted door nor removed the green paper ... from its sidelights: she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond' (31).

Her evaluation of Osmond during her first visit to his house on the hill-top further demonstrates her intense dislike of vulgarity: 'a man living alone away from vulgar troubles thinking about art, beauty and history' (378). As in her first meeting with Osmond, so during her visit she resists her judgement, and indulges in an imaginative view. Although she notices the dichotomy between the outdoors and the indoors ('it was cold even in the month of May'), she disregards her judgement and does not hesitate to enter: 'there was something grave and strong in the place; it looked somehow as if, once you were in, you would need an act of energy to get out. For Isabel, however, there was of course as yet no thought of getting out, but only of advancing' (364).

To Isabel, Osmond represents an original: 'her mind contained no class offering a natural place to Mr Osmond--he was a specimen apart' (376). Indeed, her initial feelings about him are so much Dorothea-like that one cannot ignore the resemblances. Like Dorothea, who interprets Casaubon's Locke-like appearance as signifying

a great soul, Isabel moves below the surface, hurriedly following her imagination to 'impalpabilities. His dense, delicate hair, his overdrawn, retouched features, his clear complexion... these personal points struck our sensitive young woman as signs of quality, of intensity, somehow as promises of interest' (376). The immensity of her projections culminates in the remark, 'it was not so much what he said and did, but rather what he withheld'. Vagueness, silence, suggestiveness keep Isabel's imagination awake and hold her judgement under control. And when Osmond gives an account of his life, Isabel's imagination is given its opportunity to complete the incomplete: 'This would have been rather a dry account ... if Isabel had fully believed it; but her imagination supplied the human element which she was sure had not been wanted' (382-83).

The image, which Isabel carries away with her after her first visit to Osmond, is full of projections, like a 'germ' continually expanding in her mind: it was 'the image of a quiet, clever, sensitive, distinguished man, strolling on a moss-grown terrace above the sweet Val d'Arno and holding by the hand a little girl.... The picture had no flourishes, but she liked its lowness of tone and the atmosphere of summer twilight that pervaded it' (399). Like Warburton, Osmond seems to be seen 'from the outside' as his appearance is blended with the outdoor surroundings. Since she does not know Osmond well, the qualities she attributes to his character seem

to be merely the result of the impression the 'atmosphere' has upon her.

The influence of the surroundings upon Isabel's imagination has been evident during her first visit. Referring to Osmond's garden, Isabel thinks that 'the scene had an extraordinary charm. The air was almost solemnly still, and the large expanse of the landscape, with its gardenlike culture and nobleness of outline ... lay there in splendid harmony and classic grace' (380). After she goes away, Isabel internalizes the external; she transforms image into idea, as she finds the qualities of this landscape in Osmond's character, believing that she sees in him 'an element of nobleness; of a care for beauty and perfection so natural and so cultivated together that the career appeared to stretch beneath it in the disposed vistas and with the ranges and the steps and fountains of a formal Italian garden' (399-400). At this point Isabel not only thinks of Osmond in the same terms employed about his garden, but explicitly compares him with 'a formal Italian garden'. It is these surroundings that enchant her imagination--sensitive as it is to exteriors. Isabel's impressions of Rome are implicitly compared to her feelings for Osmond. Moving from museums to historic sights, she, we are told, 'went about in a repressed ecstasy of contemplation, seeing often in the things she looked at a great deal more than was there' (413-14); simultaneously, she demonstrates what Gombrich describes as 'the beholder's share in the

reading of the artist's image'--an attribution of meanings which do not really exist.³

Silence and solitude are the conditions necessary to an aesthetic experience and Isabel seems to understand and feel this very intensely when she is left alone in the 'glorious room, among the shining antique marbles' and she sits down 'in the centre of the circle of these presences, regarding them vaguely, resting her eyes on their beautiful blank faces; listening, as it were, to their eternal silence'. The transformation is achieved through the kind of passiveness which Coleridge extolled as having the dignity of great activity. Isabel's experience here seems to embody the pictorial culmination of the organic theory of imagination. Becoming the diffusive and receptive centre of the aesthetic experience, she projects the self into the object and the object becomes part of herself, while the external and the internal are reconciled and we feel the power of 'infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation' (BL, II, 253). Undoubtedly she is here the active perceiver attributing qualities to the scene, experiencing a reciprocity with elements without. Like Dorothea, she sees the 'blank faces' of the statues, but she is not overwhelmed by their silence because she infuses life into them and can feel the 'effect of their noble quietude'. While Isabel is experiencing an artistic

³Art and Illusion, p. 155.

vision, we can feel the systolic-dystolic process. The dimensions expand to touch us, as her eyes move from the external to the internal and back again to the external, keeping the images palpitating with life, illustrating the dynamism of the imagination. From the 'beautiful blank faces' we are led to sense the 'effect of their noble quietude', which 'as with a high door closed for the ceremony, slowly drops on the spirit the large white mantle of peace'. From the internal, mental, door to the external actual windows the dimensions constantly expand. Perception and imagination are 'twin demons' as her heightened perception acquires imaginative hues, becoming aware of the inner-outer interplay: 'the blinds were partly closed in the windows of the Capitol, and a clear, warm shadow rested on the figures and made them mildly human'. Indeed, 'imagination is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are fixed and dead' (BL, I, 202). And the scene expands to touch life and involve us, affect us, draw us into the circle of her creative experience as she is 'wondering to what, of their experience, their absent eyes were open, and how, to our ears, their alien lips would sound' (II, 7-8). The senses intercommunicate--warmth stimulates the visual which in turn brings forth the auditory.

Why is all this interrupted by Osmond? His response to art has already been contrasted with Isabel's in St Peter's and is further underlined by Isabel's response to the statues. Osmond exhibits no strong feelings in his encounters with art; in fact, he remains in full

possession of the self, so the subject and object can never merge. In St Peter's, for instance, he thinks only of himself. The statues which intensely move Isabel have no effect on him. Rather, his first question, when he sees Isabel has to do with Lord Warburton who had just been rejected once more by Isabel. Osmond's discovery of Lord Warburton's attachment presents 'a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself a young lady who had qualified herself to figure in his collection of choice objects by declining so noble a hand' (II, 9). Unlike Isabel, Osmond is incapable of expansion.

Isabel's aesthetic experience is implicitly contrasted with her feelings about Osmond. Like Lydgate, who is unable to transfer his scientific theory to his emotional life, Isabel is incapable of applying her aesthetic perspective to her relationship with Osmond. No inner-outer interplay takes place in her view of him because, as she admits even after she is completely disillusioned with him, 'there was something in her imagination he could always appeal to against her judgement' (II, 354). When Osmond proposes to her, he instantaneously disarms her judgement. As the tears come into her eyes, 'they obeyed the sharpness of the pang that suggested to her somehow the slipping of a fine bolt--backward, forward, she couldn't have said which' (II, 18). Her imagination is no longer under any restraint--the bolts 'slip'. Because Isabel can no longer 'make use of her judgement alone', she must pay the penalty of 'having given undue encouragement to the

faculty of seeing without judging'. All she can see when Osmond proposes is what is not there: 'The words he had uttered made him, as he stood there, beautiful and generous, invested him as with the golden air of early autumn' (II, 18). With Osmond, Isabel cannot 'move back into the deepest shade' of her judgement as she did with Warburton; and though her imagination hangs back for a few moments with apprehension, Isabel advances as she walks into Osmond's house in spite of her reservations: 'there was a last vague space it couldn't cross--a dusky, uncertain tract which looked ambiguous and even slightly treacherous, like a moorland seen in the winter twilight. But she was to cross it yet' (II, 22). She must fulfill her tragic destiny.

Osmond's house turns out to be the 'strange unseen place', 'the region of terror', foreshadowed in the germinal image. Soon after her marriage, Isabel regards it as 'the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation', where she feels 'an incredulous terror' (II, 196). And although Osmond seemed originally to have brought to her 'the light of the stars' (II, 82) that she had longed for ('deep in her soul .. lay the belief that if a certain light should dawn she could give herself completely' (71-72)), after her marriage she discovers that he 'deliberately almost malignantly had put the lights out one by one'. Osmond himself, ironically, seems to understand his role when he describes his marriage to Goodwood: '"She speaks for me, my wife; why shouldn't I speak for her? We're as united,

you know, as the candlestick and the snuffers"' (II, 309). Coldness and darkness are associated with Osmond and, in this respect, as in many others, he seems but Casaubon's transformation. In fact, Isabel's disillusionments are echoes of Dorothea's. For the first time when Isabel visits Osmond, she loses her sense of superiority and becomes Dorothea-like in her worries lest her remarks should reflect 'grossness of perception' (379); then she looks up to Osmond as the 'kindest of ciceroni' who will lead her to knowledge and beauty (378). Madame Merle has also identified Osmond with Casaubon when she said, '"as cicerone of your museum you appear to particular advantage"' (348).

After her marriage, however, she moves beneath the surface, discovering that 'under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers' (II, 196). Instead of the anticipated 'infinite vista of a multiplied life', Isabel finds herself in a Dorothea-like predicament, 'a dark narrow alley with a dead wall at the end'. Again the transformation from Middlemarch is more concise and more concrete but the resemblance is striking, since Dorothea discovers in Rome also 'with stifling depression that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by ante-rooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither' (227-28). Mistrust is the result of both marriages, which are based on a lopsided relationship.

Osmond's regard for Isabel is also but a transformation of Casaubon's. Like Casaubon, who does not 'find his spirits rising' at his approaching marriage, Osmond does not experience the anticipated excitement, once he is certain he has won Isabel's love: 'the elation of success, which surely now flamed high in Osmond, emitted meanwhile very little smoke for so brilliant a blaze' (II, 78). And like Casaubon, who believes that he deserves Dorothea's love, Osmond is convinced '"If I do succeed before I die, I shall thoroughly have earned it'" (II, 11).

Osmond's egotism, like Casaubon's, is also reflected in his expectations of his spouse as an intelligent but submissive creature. The glass, which is the image of egotism in Middlemarch is present here when Osmond utters his conception of ideal marriage: 'What could be a finer thing to live with than a high spirit attuned to softness? For would not the softness be all for one's self What could be a happier gift in a companion than a quick, fanciful mind which saved one repetitions and reflected one's thought on a polished, elegant surface?' (II, 79).

Like Dorothea, Isabel becomes intensely aware of the nature of her relationship during her vigil when she realizes that her husband had expected 'her mind ... to be his--attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park' (II, 200). The image itself seems but a pitiable transformation of Isabel's garden with 'lengthening vistas' (72), her initial conception of her

own mind. Like Casaubon, Osmond is shocked to find his wife turning into his critic: 'He had plenty of contempt, and it was proper his wife should be as well furnished; but that she should turn the hot light of her disdain upon his own conception of things--this was a danger he had not allowed for' (II, 201). Disappointment with her marriage forces Isabel to see the quixotic elements of her imagination, her tendency to mistake 'a part for the whole' (II, 191), like Dorothea who misinterpreted everything 'as provisional and preliminary'.

But what keeps Isabel awake during the night of intense introspection is not only her evaluation of her past and her marriage, but also the haunting image which she witnesses when she comes back from one of her walks and finds Madame Merle and Osmond 'unconsciously and familiarly associated' (II, 205). While the image is projected 'just beyond the threshold of the drawing-room', it is also framed by the doorway. What Isabel sees, lasts only a moment but it 'made an image', which acquires in her mind multiple transformations, 'strange visions; she seemed to see her husband and her friend--his friend--in dim, indistinguishable combination' (II, 165, 278). Once again the significance of doorways as frames is signalled by this image.

But this image has been preceded by another more important one, Isabel's picture in Palazzo Roccanera, in the house of her suffering and her recognitions. As she enters the reception room where Rosier among other guests is waiting to see her for the first time after years 'she

looked high and splendid ... and yet oh so radiantly gentle!.... The years had touched her only to enrich her; the flower of her youth had not faded, it only hung more quietly on its stem'. The image, partaking of Dorothea's diamond-like radiance, is but a beautiful transformation of Isabel's full-figure first portrait at Gardencourt, her first appearance in 'the ample doorway': 'Now, at all events, framed in the gilded doorway, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady' (II, 105). Simultaneously, the picture illustrates how images can have what Coleridge declared 'the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant' (BL, II, 16), or how 'one image ... is made to modify many others and by a sort of fusion to force many into one' (SC, I, 212-13). Isabel here seems to become one of the valuable pictures she envies during her last visit to Gardencourt, since the 'gilded doorway' seems but a transformation of the 'faded gilding of heavy frames' of the pictures Ralph showed Isabel when she first came to Gardencourt. It is significant that it should be Rosier, a minor character, and not Osmond, who sees Isabel's picture; his qualifications as a judge precede his perception of her: 'Like his appreciation of her dear little stepdaughter it was based partly on his eye for decorative character, his instinct for authenticity; but also on a sense for uncatalogued values, for that secret of a "lustre" beyond any recorded losing or rediscovering, which his devotion to brittle wares had still not disqualified him to recognise. Mrs Osmond, at

present, might well have gratified such tastes' (II, 105).

Unlike Rosier who can transfer his aesthetic view to life, that is, can see life from an artistic perspective, Osmond is unable to appreciate life as much as his art-treasures. His constant preoccupation with Pansy's value or his regard of her as a work of art is perverse; he views her with an aesthetic detachment that does not take into consideration her own feelings and rights as an individual. His decision to send her back to the convent illustrates his perverse egotism. There is a subtle collision between the terms of nature and those of art in Osmond's terminology, highlighted by irony: 'if he regarded his daughter as a precious work of art it was natural he should be more and more careful about the finishing touches' (II, 349). Aesthetics and morals come into conflict when Osmond evokes images of Pansy in the convent and enjoys his own compositions without any consideration for Pansy herself:

"One's daughter should be fresh and fair; she should be innocent and gentle.... Pansy's a little dusty, a little dishevelled; she has knocked about too much.... Convents are very quiet, very convenient, very salutary. I like to think of her there, in the old garden, under the arcade, among those tranquil virtuous women"... His tone, however, was that of a man not so much offering an explanation as putting a thing into words--almost into pictures--to see, himself, how it would look. He considered a while the picture he had evoked and seemed greatly pleased with it (II, 347-48).

Osmond's pictures are illustrations of his inability to go beyond the picture's frame and follow the picture till it touches life. The emphasis on his respect for convention underlines his inability to perceive anything in an 'unhabitual way' or to resist the tendency of 'assimilating impressions in any but the old ways'.⁴ His is the systolic perspective and this is why he cannot see Isabel framed by the doorway, this is why he can play 'theoretic tricks on the delicate organism of his daughter' (II, 348).

Guided by her sympathetic imagination, Isabel immediately projects herself into Pansy after she finds out about Madame Merle: the effect of the Countess' disclosure is to make her expand not shrink--'to make her reach out a hand' (II, 374). Yet Isabel's initial impression of Pansy is negative, demonstrating her habit of judging 'quickly and freely'. During her first visit to Osmond's house, Isabel turns to Pansy to justify her misgivings about the people there: 'perfect simplicity was not the badge of his family. Even the little girl from the convent ... with her small submissive face and her hands locked before her ... had a kind of finish that was not entirely artless' (367). Gradually, however, Pansy becomes part of Isabel, for she embodies the duty to which she longs to devote herself in the crisis of her life. Indeed, Pansy seems to be Isabel's transfiguration as she, like Isabel, is framed by windows and doorways.

⁴William James, p. 328.

Although a minor character, Pansy is meant to remain in our memory and this is why her portrait is carefully framed.

The very first time Pansy is framed by a window is the first time we meet her, when she 'stared out of the window; her eyes ... filled with tears' as she waves good-bye to the nuns who have brought her home from the convent (338). Madame Merle has come in at the time and when she and Osmond begin to talk, he suggests that Pansy leave the room; but Pansy sweetly proposes, '"If you like I won't listen"' and sits down 'deferentially, near the door, within sight of the garden, into which she directed her innocent, wistful eyes' (340). Although inside, she is mentally outside, resembling Isabel's nature. When Isabel discovers Pansy's innocence and artlessness, while Osmond is in Rome, we are again made aware of windows 'that had been half-darkened, to keep out the heat, and here and there, through an easy crevice, the splendid summer day peeped in, lighting a gleam of faded colour or tarnished gilt in the rich gloom' (II, 26). The windows here have the same soothing effect they have on Isabel when she finds herself in the centre of the glorious statues in Rome. And, just in case we have not noticed the window, Pansy is framed by the doorway as she watches Isabel go forward in the world in which she is not allowed to participate, 'and the small figure stood in the high, dark doorway, watching Isabel cross the clear, grey court and disappear into the brightness

beyond the big portone, which gave a wider dazzle as it opened' (II, 30).

But Pansy becomes most clearly Isabel when Isabel decides to become Osmond. Like Dorothea, who needs to act for Will's sake in order to escape her egotistical self-pity and suffering, Isabel clings on to Osmond's wish to marry Pansy to Warburton, deciding to make his wish her duty. Pansy in her room with the light out, by the 'vague firelight' is but Isabel's reflection in the night of her meditative vigil. Isabel is startled into an intense awareness of the falsity of her role when Pansy reveals her perception of Lord Warburton: "He knows I don't want to marry, and he wants me to know that he therefore won't trouble me. That's the meaning of his kindness. It's as if he said to me: "I like you very much, but if it doesn't please you I'll never say it again: I think that's very kind, very noble"". For the first time Isabel discovers 'the depths of perception of which this submissive little person was capable; she felt afraid of Pansy's wisdom--began almost to retreat before it.... There was something brilliant in her lucidity, and it made her companion draw a long breath.... Pansy had a sufficient illumination of her own' (II, 260).

Pansy, like Mrs Touchett (whom Isabel also considered as her inferior in perception), proves Isabel's superior in this scene and her superiority is emphasized as she stands 'in the open doorway; she had drawn the curtain for Isabel to pass'. Her declaration that Mr Rosier looks like a nobleman, reminds us of Ralph's remark to

Isabel when she first comes to Gardencourt, "'It's not a romantic old house.... It's a dismally prosaic one; there's no romance here but what you may have brought with you"'.

Pansy's voice entreating Isabel to come back is what remains within Isabel when she returns to Gardencourt: "'You'll come back?" she called out in a voice that Isabel remembered afterwards. "Yes--I'll come back"' (II, 386). Although helpless, submissive, and seemingly Isabel's opposite, Pansy is in fact Isabel's extension.

Isabel, on the other hand, seems Ralph's extension. Ralph very early sees her as the embodiment of his sense of freedom and independence. Their paths, though divergent, converge at the end; their figures seem to interchange, like an image superimposed on another, as Ralph dies, infusing life into Isabel, shaking her out of her spiritual paralysis. Very early, Ralph perceives Isabel's originality (87), but he does not class her with works of art. As he is showing her the pictures in the gallery in Gardencourt, he decides that she is 'better worth looking at than most works of art' (61). Unlike Osmond, Ralph is gifted with an artist's double vision and sees Isabel from such a perspective:

"a character like that" he said to himself--"a real little passionate force to see at play is the finest thing in nature. It's finer than the finest work of art--than a Greek bas-relief, than a great Titian, than a Gothic cathedral... I had never been more blue, more bored.... Suddenly I receive a Titian, by the post, to hang on my wall--a Greek bas-relief to stick over my chimney-piece" (86).

Unlike Osmond, who thinks he can shape life into a work of art, Ralph sees life as superior to art; and his double vision, his holistic perspective, ranging from the exterior to the interior, is displayed in his likening of Isabel to a house: 'The key of a beautiful edifice is thrust into my hand, and I'm told to walk in and admire' (86). Ralph establishes the continuity between the organic and the mechanical and emphasizes its importance as he contemplates the key and the edifice: 'He surveyed the edifice from the outside and admired it greatly; he looked in at the windows and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he saw it only by glimpses and that he had not yet stood under the roof. The door was fastened, and though he had keys in his pocket he had a conviction that none of them would fit' (87). Who then is to be allowed to stand under the roof? If the reader is aware of the inner/outer interplay, then he will be admitted indoors.

Ralph himself is compared to a house before Isabel appears. At the beginning of the novel he is contrasted with Warburton--'tall, lean, loosely and feebly put together, he had an ugly sickly, witty, charming face, furnished, but by no means decorated, with a straggling moustache and whisker' (5). Like a house, Ralph is 'put together' and is 'furnished'. Ralph is then early identified with Isabel who is also compared to a house; indeed, he never ceases to think of her but in terms of houses. After he hears of Osmond's courtship, for instance, Ralph is certain Isabel will reject him: 'He

had no conviction she would stop at a third. She would keep the gate ajar and open a parley; she would certainly not allow number three to come in' (395). And when Isabel tries to conceal her misery from him he is aware that 'she concealed it elaborately; she was perpetually, in their talk, hanging out curtains and arranging screens' (II, 203).

Ralph in many respects seems to be Will's transformation. Like Will, he represents freedom, and liberates Isabel from many of her own restrictive ideas. In her stifling life with Osmond, Isabel recognizes the basis of her husband's hatred for him: 'He wished her to have no freedom of mind, and he knew perfectly well that Ralph was an apostle of freedom' (II, 245). Like Will, he represents the light that brightens other people's lives: 'He was a bright, free, generous spirit, he had all the illumination of wisdom and none of its pedantry' (II, 60). And like Will, who is a lunette in the wall of Dorothea's prison, Ralph soothes Isabel's suffering and expands her restriction: 'There was an everlasting weight on her heart--there was a livid light on everything. But Ralph's little visit was a lamp in the darkness.... There was something in Ralph's talk, in his smile ... that made the blasted circle round which she walked more spacious' (II, 203). Constantly, Ralph tries to disburden Isabel from her puritanical notions in order to encourage her imagination to soar. To Isabel's worry about her fortune Ralph responds:

"Take things more easily. Don't ask yourself so much whether this or that is good for you. Don't question your conscience so much--it will get out of tune like a strummed piano. Keep it for great occasions. Don't try so much to form your character--it's like trying to pull open a tight, tender young rose. Live as you like best, and your character will take care of itself.... You've too much power of thought--above all too much conscience.... Spread your wings; rise above the ground. It's never wrong to do that" (319).

Through his father's bequest Ralph has tried to give Isabel what she unknowingly gave him when she first came to Gardencourt. Her arrival meant for Ralph a liberation from the burden of his own thoughts; she 'had refreshed and quickened them, given them wings and something to fly for' (84). His ardent faith in Isabel's imagination is not checked by his father's warning that she might fall the victim to fortune-hunters; Ralph insists that he wants to 'put wind in her sails', 'to see her going before the breeze' (262). By playing Isabel's providence, he seems to try to make his and her paths converge, since the bequest, or so he believes, will enable her to meet the 'requirements' of her imagination and by so doing the requirements of his own imagination (261, 265). Ironically, Isabel does meet the requirements of her imagination but Ralph is 'awfully sold' (320), since he sees her marriage as her imprisonment, as the rift in their friendship. From 'unlimited expansion' Isabel comes to define freedom as one's ability 'to choose a corner and cultivate it' (II, 65), or 'to follow out a good feeling' (II, 73). To

Ralph's urging for expansion, Isabel remarks, '"You talk about one's soaring and sailing, but if one marries at all one touches the earth"' (II, 74).

Isabel's imperceptiveness to Ralph's warning against Osmond is underlined by her disregard of the beautiful garden scene until she thinks of it in retrospect and realizes that he was right. Osmond has managed to capture Isabel's imagination to such an extent that she cannot enter into Ralph's concern for her future marriage to a 'narrow, selfish', 'sterile dilettante' (II, 70-71). Her terminating their conversation by going into the house prefigures the last scene when she turns away from Goodwood and seeks refuge in Gardencourt. At the same time Ralph recognizes the power of Isabel's imagination over her perception. Her justification of her love for Osmond illustrates her ability to complete the incomplete, to see something as something else: 'It was wonderfully characteristic of her that, having invented a fine theory about Gilbert Osmond, she loved him not for what he really possessed, but for his very poverties dressed out as honours' (II, 75).

Osmond is the cause of Ralph's and Isabel's conflict, the reason why their paths diverge for the first time, but he is also the one to effect their convergence. Isabel's disillusionment with her marriage forces her to recognize Ralph's wisdom, whereas his impending death signals the merging of their spirits. Anxious to return to Gardencourt, to die in his home, Ralph thinks of his last wish, 'to extend himself in the

large quiet room where he had last seen his father lie, and close his eyes upon the summer dawn' (II, 299). To complete the circle, to return to Gardencourt, to die where his father dies, to be indoors while having glimpses of the outdoors is the desire of his expansive, creative spirit. It is not a mere coincidence that Isabel thinks of Gardencourt as Ralph's final resting place in the same terms, 'in one of those deep, dim chambers of Gardencourt where the dark ivy would cluster round the edges of the glimmering window' (II, 296). Isabel's restriction in the house of suffocation has increased her longing for expansion.

She herself completes the circle by her return to Gardencourt to be by Ralph's side. During her journey from Rome, while reminiscing about her first visit, she is aware of the cyclical motion of her life:

'Gardencourt had been her starting-point, and to those muffled chambers it was at least a temporary solution to return. She had gone forth in her strength; she would come back in her weakness, and if the place had been a rest to her before, it would be a sanctuary now' (II, 391). This indeed seems to be the circumference of the novel within which other circles are contained. The pattern of circle within circle emphasizes the cyclical movement of the imagination, the organic character of the novel, its bicentrality, its multidimensional nature--all features The Portrait of a Lady shares with Middlemarch. We have already seen Isabel in other 'circles': when Lord Warburton, for instance, proposes to her, she is proud of

having 'a system and an orbit of her own' (144); and when he approaches her in Rome, she is lost in thought: 'from the Roman past to Isabel Archer's future was a long stride, but her imagination had taken it in a single flight and now hovered in slow circles over the nearer and richer field' (415); and when Osmond finds her in the Capitol, she is in the centre of the glorious statues.

Her journey from Rome contains images echoing Dorothea's attitudes and recognitions. Her unawareness of the exterior signals her movement inward, the revelations to come. Like Dorothea, who often looks without seeing and is oblivious to what happens outside her window, Isabel performs her journey 'with sightless eyes and took little pleasure in the countries she traversed, decked out though they were in the richest freshness of spring'. Imagination, in this case, in Ruskin's words, spends 'its energy on things past and future, or out of sight, rather than things present, or in sight' (MP, III, 181). And like Dorothea who thinks of her future as 'the long valley of her life, which looked so flat and empty of way-marks' (830), Isabel disregards the spring blossoms outside because 'her thoughts followed their course through other countries--strange looking, dimly-lighted, pathless lands, in which there was no change of seasons, but only, as it seemed, a perpetual dreariness of winter'. But her glimpses of the future are also mingled with her memories: 'Disconnected visions passed through it [her mind], and sudden dull gleams of memory, of expectation'; in fact, past and

future become interchangeable in the cycle of her thoughts, as they 'came and went at their will, but she saw them only in fitful images, which rose and fell by a logic of their own' (II, 390). By means of her imagination, she tries to understand her present experience 'in the light of past and future experience'.⁵ Simultaneously, we can see how, by means of her memory Isabel is seeking what Bartlett believes is 'the most complete release from the narrowness of presented time and place'.⁶ And what Coleridge says of Shakespeare could very well apply to James in this case: 'while the poet registers what is past, he projects the future in a wonderful degree, and makes us feel, however slightly, and see, however dimly, that state of being in which there is neither past nor future, but all is permanent in the very energy of nature' (SC, II, 168).

By escaping from the narrowness of space and time, Isabel is released from the confining barriers of her life. Performing her journey motionless, 'detached from hope or regret', with 'sightless eyes', she seems to acquire the eternal quality of the statues she had once admired. Her suffering has not been a source of weakness but strength, a means to gaining an expansive vision. Knowledge and suffering have already been fused in Ralph's early conversation with her in the Gardencourt gallery, when she asks whether there is a ghost in the

⁵Warnock, p. 179.

⁶Remembering, p. 314.

house. "I might show it to you", Ralph replies, "but you'd never see it. The privilege isn't given to everyone; it's not enviable.... You must have suffered first, have suffered greatly, have gained some miserable knowledge. In that way your eyes are opened to it"

(64). The ghost is then associated with a wider vision--the tragic vision, which involves suffering and self-knowledge in the same cycle. The culmination of her self-knowledge takes place when she drops the mask she had worn for Ralph's sake, and confesses to him her unhappiness with Osmond: 'for nothing mattered now but the only knowledge that was not pure anguish--the knowledge that they were looking at the truth together' (II, 414). Ralph infuses life into her, even as he is dying, widens her circle as he had done in the past:

"It passes, after all; it's passing now. But love remains. I don't know why we should suffer so much.... There are many things in life. You're very young."
 "I feel very old," said Isabel.
 "You'll grow young again. That's how I see you.... I don't believe that such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little.... And remember this ... that if you've been hated you've also been loved. Ah but, Isabel--adored!" (416-17).

Isabel is privileged to see the ghost after her last interview with Ralph. But there is little doubt that the ghost is Ralph himself since Isabel, when she sees the ghost, instantly knows that Ralph has died. Her supernatural meeting takes place at dawn, 'when the darkness began vaguely to grow grey', a time which fulfills Ralph's wish, 'to close his eyes upon the summer

dawn'. As soon as she sees the ghost, 'she quitted the place and in her certainty passed through dark corridors and down a flight of oaken steps that shone in the vague light of a hall-window' (II, 418). In her certainty she is aware of a window, because she, like Ralph, can understand the meaning of windows, the expansive view, the release they can offer.

Since the ghost appears within the interior of the house and it appeals to Isabel's imagination ('exterior'), it would not be unjustified to conclude that suffering becomes the means of reconciliation of her conflict between the 'interior' and the 'exterior', or the clash between her imagination and her judgement. After the vision of the ghost, after the reconciliation of the conflict within her, Isabel can see through her tears the external world to which she was blind to during her journey, and she can feel the soothing effect of Spring, 'the beauty of the day, the splendour of nature, the sweetness of the old English churchyard' (II, 420). Her suffering is regenerative; she has become capable of looking at life from an entirely new perspective. This reconciliation also enables her to refuse to follow Goodwood, who in the final scene excites her imagination for the first time: 'His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread and spread again, and stayed' (II, 436).

As Goodwood appears in front of the 'historical bench' where Warburton had once proposed to her, the circle is slowly moving towards its completion,

illustrating, as it were, Coleridge's assertion that the purpose of all narrative is to make a straight line into a circle. Within the last few pages we can feel the palpitating rhythm of the whole book as all the images are projected in a terse version, achieving the 'spatial saturation' of the germinal image. A series of opposites is necessary to make us feel more intensely their reconciliation which is present in the aesthetic integration at the end of the book. Here imagination 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate' (BL, I, 202). In Isabel's collision, her last temptation, we see shrinking and expanding, systole and diastole, as she 'shrank into herself', yet 'the world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round her [again the circle], to take the form of a mighty sea, where she floated in fathomless waters' (II, 435). The oceanic images present throughout the novel are here also in a terse version presented through the opposites, floating and sinking. The thought of following Goodwood means escape from restriction, floating in 'fathomless waters', but at the same time it is a 'kind of rapture, in which she felt herself sink and sink. In the movement she seemed to beat with her feet, in order to catch herself, to feel something to rest on' (II, 435). Gardens and desert, sweetness and poison represent Isabel's double vision of Goodwood's invitation: 'The rest was that she had never been loved before ... this was the hot wind of the desert, at the approach of which the others dropped dead, like mere

sweet airs of the garden. It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet, while the very taste of it, as if something potent, acrid and strange, forced open her set teeth' (II, 434).

But darkness and light, outer and inner, restraint and freedom represent the predominant rhythm in this last passage as they have throughout The Portrait of a Lady, and throughout Middlemarch as well. Everything takes place in the twilight when the interplay of darkness with light is at its most dramatic. The idea of escape seems to Isabel 'like a comet in the sky'--soaring again--and Goodwood's kiss is like 'white lightning'. Overwhelmed by her chance to escape, Isabel's expansive spirit does not lose itself in 'the largeness of her opportunity' but moves beyond the present moment to encompass the past and the future. Goodwood's kiss initiates a train of images, representing her past feeling about him, and making her feel, 'each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession' (II, 436). Future, past, and present are all captured and experienced within a single moment in the image of sinking, by means of Isabel's expansive, penetrative, synthetical imagination. Escape from Osmond would also mean restraint by Goodwood, but most importantly restriction within her own spirit effected by the fall below her own standards. This would identify her with Osmond, who was once so fine but whose hatred, distrust,

and suspicion has made her feel as if 'he was going down-down; the vision of such a fall made her almost giddy: that was the only pain' (II, 275). Sinking, not soaring (like a comet), is the dominant feeling Goodwood evokes: 'So she had heard of those wrecked and under water following a train of images before they sink'.

Isabel's judgement and imagination are reconciled at this crucial moment and become the reins she holds to her liberation: 'But when darkness returned she was free. She never looked about her; she only darted from the spot' (II, 436). Gardencourt serves as the sanctuary which Isabel had believed it to be. Unlike Dorothea, who looks outward from her window and seems to move outward, Isabel turns inward towards the house, but the exterior and the interior become 'indistinguishably mingled' as the indoors offer 'a very straight path'. Where does the path lead? It stretches all the way out to reach our lives, to lead our imaginations to form it. The promise of the incomplete, one of the most important aspects of organicism, draws the reader into the artist's magic circle of creation:

There were lights in the windows of the house; they shone far across the lawn. In an extraordinarily short time--for the distance was considerable--she had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door. Here only she paused. She looked all about her; she listened a little; then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path (II, 436).

With a few strokes James effects the 'spatial saturation' of the germinal image. The glow of the interior, the lights of the house, is shining 'across the lawn', exhibiting a balance between the interior and the exterior, the sweet harmony we experienced at the opening of the novel when all was well and the 'wide carpet of turf that covered the level hill-top seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior' (3). At the same time, we can see how images are fused into one: The image of Isabel standing in front of the door, her hand on the latch, is but a transformation of her first 'portrait' in the 'ample doorway' or her picture in Palazzo Roccanera, 'framed in the gilded doorway'. Isabel seems in full possession of her judgement since she has her hand on the latch and is no longer in fear of the faculty 'of seeing without judging'. As she turns from the darkness of the exterior--her imagination--to the light of the interior--her judgement--she effects an integration within herself, and in the process she regains her freedom, the very liberty which her husband seemed to have smothered. Turning physically inward, she also moves mentally inward, liberating herself, finding freedom by not violating her own standards. To Henrietta's urging to leave her husband, Isabel had earlier answered in existentialist terms: '" I don't know what great unhappiness might bring me to; but it seems to me I shall always be ashamed. One must accept one's deeds. I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate' (II, 284).

Since she no longer sees her husband through her imagination, she follows her judgement--her duty to her responsibilities--and liberates herself from the bonds of an entirely external perspective, with her judgement and her imagination in harmony. The dichotomy between the external and internal perspectives is broken and their harmony effects a holistic view, an exquisite fusion of the aesthetic, the psychological, and the moral.

The final rhythm in The Portrait of a Lady is the same one which prevails in Middlemarch, whether we consider the final window scene or the concluding words of the Finale:

But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

The key in either novel is growth, an incessant interchange between the external and the internal, the image and the idea. From the garden, the external, Isabel turns to the internal--Gardencourt--but again to the external--'straight path'. The dramatic use of light and dark contrast Isabel's figure with deep shadows, and the frame disappears as Isabel moves and will soon be out of sight. Since she moves in the same direction as the light in the picture, we feel that the light (like the sunbeam in Middlemarch) is a force which helps her and at the same time increases the importance of her last act. James does not name that act, perhaps because he is

intensely conscious of the kind of truth which Coleridge expressed in reference to The Tempest: 'The power of poetry is, by a single word perhaps, to instil that energy into the mind, which compels the imagination to produce the picture' (SC, II, 174). And by trying to see that single word, the path, we internalize The Portrait of a Lady.

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